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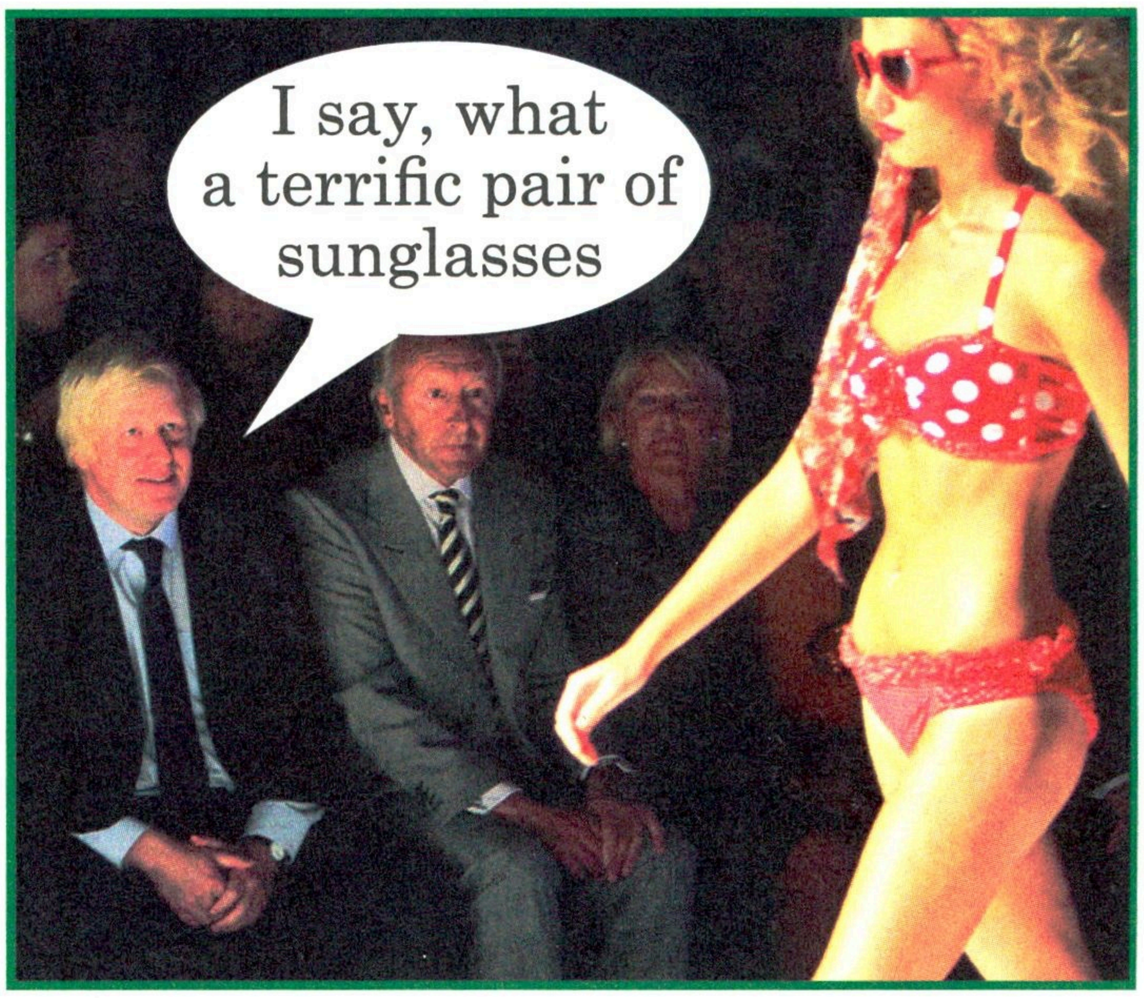

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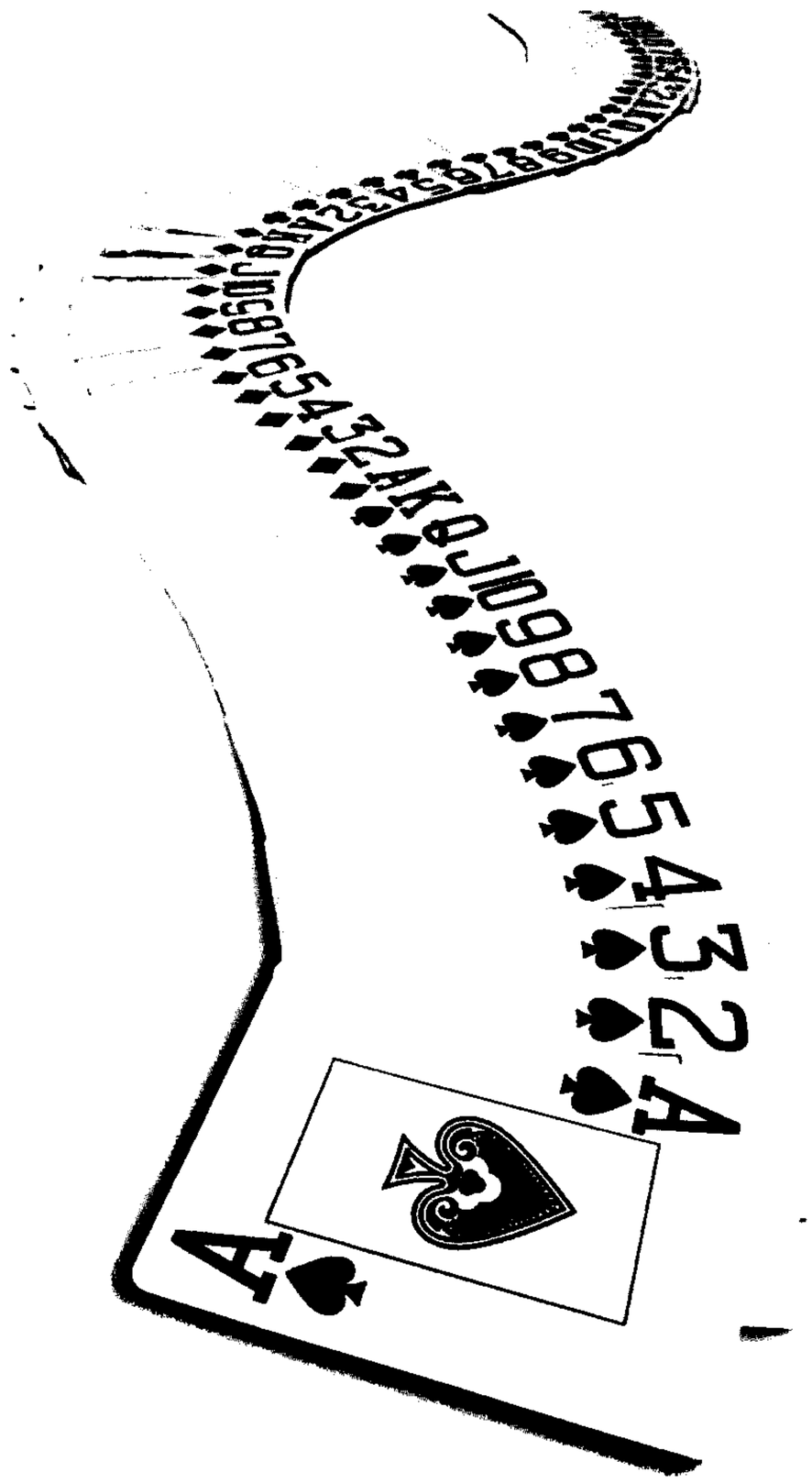

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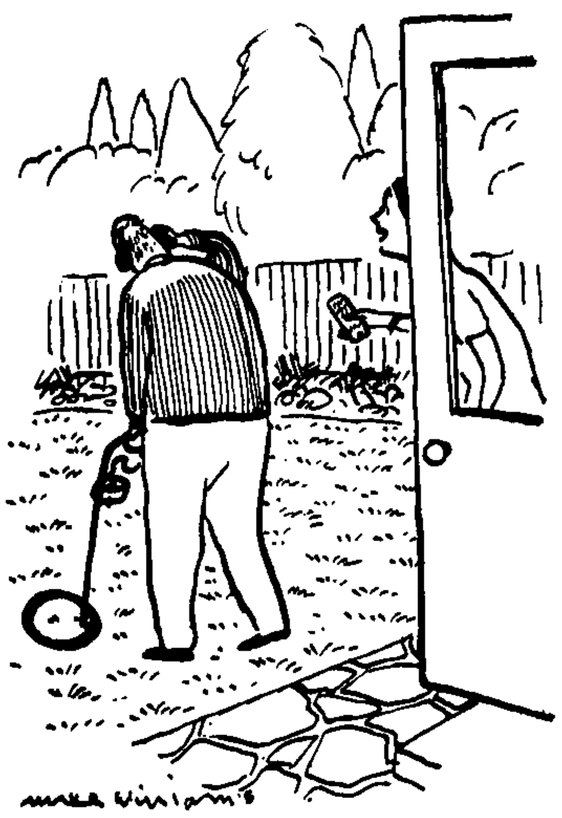

"Alistair, it's Gordon for you. Found anything yet?"

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ABC

Your regular happy pill

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Legal News

LAST month a certain institution obtained a high court injunction to prevent a certain newspaper from publishing a certain document. More than that we cannot say; to do so is fraught with danger.

The battle between press freedom and prior restraint dates back at least to the era of John Wilkes. "Wilkes and Liberty!" was the chant of his followers in the 18th century, and a few years ago it seemed that Liberty was finally winning. If a company or individual tried to injunct a newspaper in advance but the newspaper said that it would justify the story in any subsequent libel action, the tendency of judges was to say "publish and be sued". For a while, pre-emptive high court orders seemed to be going the way of Spangles and the Bay City Rollers.

Not now. Thanks to some aggressive solicitors and timorous judges, prior restraint is now a flourishing industry. If lawyers get a whiff that one of their clients is about to be embarrassed, late in the evening they contact a duty judge – often one who has no experience of libel or media law. And the judge, reached down a phone line while eating his dinner and half-watching *Coronation Street*, errs on the side of caution. The newspaper may not even be aware of this "hearing without notice", still less have a chance to argue its case.

But that isn't all. The new breed of super-injunction is far more oppressive than the traditional court order under which a newspaper or TV channel is (perhaps temporarily) prevented from publishing a particular allegation. It usually includes an order that "the publication of *all information* relating to these proceedings or of information describing them or the intended claim is expressly prohibited." (Our italics.) In other words, nobody can report that the order has been granted, or who applied for it. Even the identities of the judge and the newspaper remain secret, and anyone who even hints at them "may be held to be contempt of court and may be imprisoned, fined or have their assets seized".

So it was last year when Andrew Marr won an injunction to stop the media revealing "private information" about him – and to stop them revealing that he'd stopped them. Marr himself was on record arguing against a judge-made privacy law and calling for a public debate on the subject. Any such debate should include some reference to the effect of super-injunctions; yet Marr's, like many others these days, was so draconian that one couldn't mention its existence.

Nor were we allowed to know on what grounds it had been given. After a long struggle by Lord Gnome's lawyers, the order was varied so that we could at least say that he'd obtained it, while not repeating the story he wished to suppress.

Something similar happened last year when another TV presenter won a gagging order stopping publication of the fact that a death threat had been received by the broadcaster for whom he works. Even the facts in the previous sentence could not have been reported under the original terms of the order. It was only after more pushing and shoving by Lord Gnome's lawyers that this concession was achieved.

The *Guardian*'s legal correspondent noted last week that "it is impossible to say just how many of these cases there are", since no one can report or discuss them – though the *Eye* learns that one MP hopes to break the conspiracy of silence, under parliamentary privilege, when the Commons reassembles later this month. But it's clear that they are breeding and sprouting like giant hogweed: "The *Guardian*, for instance, has been served with at least 12 notices of injunctions that could not be reported so far this year, compared with six in the whole of 2006 and five in 2005."

To which some readers might say: so what? Are our lives impoverished by not being allowed to know that a broadcaster has had a death threat, or wishes to keep his private life private? But of course it isn't only bashful celebs who benefit from this clampdown on free expression. Other public figures and corporations have been quick to exploit the opportunity to tick the box marked "no publicity" and thwart media scrutiny of their conduct.

Eye readers will need no reminding of the super-injunction obtained by Messrs Carter-Fuck, on behalf of former Law Society president Michael Napier, to stop us reporting that he'd been officially censured for breaching conflict of interest rules. "Freedom to report the truth is a precious thing both for the liberty of the individual and for the sake of wider society," the court of appeal said when it found in our favour after a five-month legal tussle. These noble sentiments clearly failed to impress some high court judges who have carried on injuncting like billy-o.

In one recent application for a super-injunction, the QC for the claimants explained to the judge why a newspaper must not only be stopped from publishing its story but also banned from alluding to the gagging order: if it was allowed to report the injunction, it would probably run a piece accusing his clients of trying to muzzle the press.

Which, of course, is precisely what they were doing. The super-injunction was duly granted.

"At least Obama isn't ignoring ME"

QUOTE OF THE CENTURY

"The much-vaunted Libyan counter-attack did not and could not take place. Gaddafi had not been destroyed but he had been humbled. There was a marked decline in Libyan sponsored terrorism in the succeeding years."

– Extract from Margaret Thatcher's The Downing Street Years, *published in 1993, five years* after *the Lockerbie bombing, explaining her support for the US bombing of Tripoli in 1986.*

● Lockerbie: Other names in the frame-up, 29

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NEWS

G20 promises of help for the developing world ring pretty hollow, given what's really happening.

At April's London jamboree the big deal was a £50bn "global trade liquidity pool" run by the World Bank for lending to hard-pressed businesses, largely in Africa, to which, the smallprint revealed, G20 governments would contribute £4bn. The remaining, ahem, £46bn was to come (at the usual rates) from those munificent banks that are now being let off so lightly for plunging the world economy into recession.

So how close are the world's bankers to stumping up? Not very. So far just £2.25bn, or less than 5 percent of what's needed, has been committed (but not handed over).

For all Gordon Brown's rhetoric, the British government isn't exactly leading the way either. As *Eye* 1234 reported, the UK government's £300m contribution was to be provided from the public development fund CDC. Now it emerges that CDC is coughing up just £45m, with £200m coming from the Department for International Development. DfID refuses to say why £55m has been reneged on or why the money is coming from its aid budget, which will have to be cut further to cope, rather than CDC's £1.4bn cash pile as previously promised.

The reason is almost certainly that CDC has committed all its funds (and some it hasn't raised yet) to dubious private equity investments, rather than the more urgent and useful job of lending to developing world businesses struggling to find credit.

● *CDC's seedy bedfellows Pt 2, p28*

NO SURPRISE that the big accountancy firms are doing well from their traditional role of first helping create a mess, then cleaning it up.

The Treasury has revealed that KPMG, Ernst & Young and PwC, together with Credit Suisse bank and Black Rock hedge fund, have – so far – trousered £26.6m advising on the government's asset protection scheme. This is the arrangement under which RBS and Lloyds banking group will have hundreds of billions of pounds' worth of dodgy assets insured by the taxpayer.

These are of course the same dodgy assets that would have sent the banks under, had the taxpayer not bailed them out. And who signed off the banks' accounts (as well as receiving millions in fees for consultancy services), giving the all-clear to balance sheets bearing the sub-prime loans now being insured by the taxpayer? Yep, KPMG (auditor of HBOS before it was bought by Lloyds) and PwC (auditor of Lloyds).

CAN you believe a word a state-supported bank tells you? Not if it's the Lloyds Banking Group.

Soon after the banking bail-out was announced last year, the *Eye* asked if the bank would stop helping its customers avoid tax using offshore accounts, costing the taxpayer billions every year. "Lloyds TSB has never assisted customers to avoid tax liabilities and we worked with government in helping to shape the EU savings directive to counter tax avoidance," said the bank indignantly.

How odd, then, that last week a BBC *Panorama* undercover camera exposed the bank in Jersey advising punters on exactly how to avoid tax on investments. The idea was to route income that would be covered by the EU's anti-tax evasion savings directive outside the EU to avoid the tax.

This directive was always shot through with easy loopholes (which the Treasury under Gordon Brown resisted closing down so as not to upset the City). But then, as Lloyds boasts, it was written by the banks for the banks.

Street of Shame

"ASK anyone and they will know a story of a teacher who married a pupil, or talk about an affair at their school," mused *Sunday Times* columnist Eleanor Mills after the sentencing of trumpet teacher Helen Goddard for her sexual relationship with a pupil.

"Such relationships may be tempting but that does not make them right," Mills added. "To have sex with a pupil is a terrible abuse of power. Teachers who transgress deserve to be punished. They should know better."

Seven pages separated Mills's column from that of her colleague, former chief inspector of schools Chris Woodhead, who in his teaching days had a lengthy relationship with one of his pupils, Amanda Johnston. Both Ms Johnston and Mr Woodhead insist that the relationship did not begin until "a long time after" she left school – although Ms Johnston's contemporaries at Gordano School and Mr Woodhead's then wife Cathy recall a rather different timeline (*Eyes passim*).

Sadly, none of the correspondents to Woodhead's regular "Answer the Question" column that week brought up the case of Ms Goddard – but thankfully, his answer to a similar question, posed at a conference in Exeter University in 1999, remains on record: "I don't think necessarily that a teacher should be automatically drummed out of the profession. I think human beings can get themselves into messes and I think those messes can sometimes be experiential and educative on both sides."

PS: A staunch defender of Woodhead throughout the revelations a decade ago about his relationship was his close friend Melanie Phillips, who dismissed Cathy Woodhead's detailed account of her ex-husband's affair as an "unsubstantiated smear" and "a torrid stream of allegations about his private life". So what did she have to say about the remarkably similar Goddard case in her *Daily Mail* column last week? "Sordid and repellent behaviour… A crucial aspect of a teacher's role is to be *in loco parentis*. To abuse that trust by exploiting a child's immaturity and vulnerability is just about the most serious offence a teacher can commit."

WHITHER Gary Duncan, economics editor of the *Times*, in these testing times for the financial world?

The last time his byline appeared in the paper was way back on 6 August, when he made the front-page prediction that "the Bank of England would give a further sign today that the economy is on the mend and end its policy of quantitative easing, the process of injecting money into the economy to jump-start growth… Many City experts were betting that it would show its confidence in an early end to recession by putting the scheme on hold at noon today."

Two things happened later that day: the Bank of England announced that, far from dumping quantitative easing, it was expanding the policy by a further £50bn, and Gary Duncan flew into a screaming rage with a hapless sub-editor whom he blamed – quite unjustly – for the cock-up, bawling him out in front of colleagues. Duncan was swiftly hauled in front of his superiors and has not been seen in the office since.

WHEN investigator extraordinaire Donal MacIntyre introduced his "weekly roundup of made-up stories" during his BBC Radio Five Live show on the evening of 20 September, why didn't he turn to the front page of that day's *Sunday Express*?

There, he could have read the shrieking headline "Madeleine: World Exclusive – I KNOW HOW SHE WAS TAKEN" above a story by… Donal MacIntyre!

NEXT Wednesday's *Times* will include a supplement revealing the lucky winners of its annual competition to choose the "Top 50 Companies Where Women Want to Work". Although it comes with the imprimatur of the *Times*, the list is compiled by Aurora, a small company run by one Glenda Stone.

Aurora's main business is a website called wheretowork.com, which offers recruitment advertising and employer branding to corporate clients in return for an annual fee of £12,000. To appear on wheretowork a company must have at least 1,000 UK employees – the very same criterion that applies to the *Times* Top 50 list.

Last year, 63 entries were received for the Top 50 competition. And – surprise! – those that didn't make it into the winners' list had one thing in common: they weren't clients of Aurora. Or, to put it another way, Aurora clients who entered the supposedly impartial competition that Glenda judges and administers – including Accenture, BAE Systems, Canon, Deloitte, HSBC, McDonald's, Royal Mail and West Midlands Police – had a success rate of 100 percent.

Just as well, given that she depends on these entrants for her company's livelihood. Shome conflict of interest, surely? One might expect the *Times* to have some sort of involvement in the selection process, but not so. Aurora simply presents the final list, the *Times* sells the advertising space and, come 7 October, 50 institutions get to pat themselves on the backs for being "the UK's most progressive organisations for women". Every one a winner!

"NOEL FIELDING has been axed as team captain on the next series of *Never Mind the Buzzcocks*," revealed *Sun* showbiz columnist Gordon Smart in August, the day after sister paper the *News of the World* "persuaded" the *Mighty Boosh* star to reveal details of his past appetite for cocaine.

"The Clown Prince had been signed up as a regular on the long-running BBC comedy panel show. But when details of his drug-taking emerged over the weekend, Beeb top brass withdrew the offer," Smart revealed.

Just under a month later, the BBC press office provided the customary coda that comes with any Smart scoop: "BBC Two's irreverent pop quiz, *Never Mind the Buzzcocks*, returns to our screens this autumn with a brand new line-up. Joining the panel this year as team captain, alongside the ever repressible [*sic*] Phill Jupitus, is *Mighty Boosh* star Noel Fielding."

WHEN not attending to his feudal duties north of the border, Scottish laird Paul Dacre is a leading light on the Press Complaints Commission and chairs the editors' code of practice committee, which oversees press self-regulation.

His committee's decision last week to issue a revised version of the code – with updated rules about privacy and harassment – could not have come at a better time. Just one day earlier, the PCC had censured two newspapers for publishing snaps of England manager Fabio Capello on a private beach holiday in spite of a specific PCC request not to do so. The names of the offending organs? The *News of the Screws* and, inevitably, the *Daily Mail*.

"Fish and chips doesn't taste the same out of a laptop"

"Scab!"

AXEWATCH

Life and Death at the *Observer* (Pt 94)

SO THE *Observer* has been reprieved – at least for the time being. "There has of course been the usual speculation from our competitors," writes Tim "Babbling" Brooks, managing director of Guardian News & Media (GNM), in his latest bulletin to staff. "As I've said many times before, you can't believe everything you read about us in other papers."

But can you believe what you read in Brooks's in-house blog? Here's how he reports the latest instalment in the *Observer* saga: "Obviously the big story last week was the announcement that GNM had recommended to the Scott Trust the option of publishing a new-look *Observer*, created by [editor] John Mulholland and a crack team over the summer. It looks great and it researched extremely well."

He omits to mention that this wasn't the only option, or the one initially favoured by *Grauniad* executives. That was entrusted to Bob Poulton – fondly known to colleagues as "Evil Bob" – who was production editor of the *Observer* until the end of May. Having taken voluntary redundancy and held a leaving party at a pub in Wharfedale Road, Evil Bob then moved into a bunker at the old *Observer* building at Herbal Hill and – in conditions of great secrecy – started putting together dummies for a *Sunday Guardian* and a magazine version of the *Observer*, after the fashion of the *Spectator* or *New Statesman*, which could be either folded into it or sold separately. These were presented to directors of GNM at their July board meeting.

Alas for Alan Rusbridger and his axe-wielding allies, the dummies did not "research extremely well". Even a focus group of hardcore *Grauniad* readers recoiled from the prospect. "I don't want the *Guardian* encroaching on my Sunday," one commented. "I don't want to be preached at in bed," said another. When the *Observer*'s design editor, Caz Roberts, was belatedly asked to prepare a dummy for a new-look *Observer*, the focus-group opinion was far more enthusiastic.

Meanwhile, the public campaign to save the *Observer* was attracting thousands of supporters, including much of the liberal establishment – to the great embarrassment of Scott Trust chairwoman Dame Liz Forgan. As we noted in the last *Eye*, the poor woman hardly dared attend a dinner party for fear of being berated by *Observer*-reading friends. And so Rusbridger was forced to retreat.

But has the paper really been saved? It may have escaped death by lethal injection only to endure a slower death by a thousand cuts. It has already been obliged to drop the TV listings section; the travel supplement may be the next to go. As other departments become ever more "integrated" with the *Grauniad*, the only bit of the *Observer* that survives may be the title. Rusbridger's cronies talk openly of their desire to create "a Potemkin *Observer*", a journalistic version of a Potemkin village – nothing more than a facade. When that has been achieved, it should be easier to change the title as well.

And then what? The Guardian Media Group lost £90m last year, of which no more than £10m is attributable to the *Observer*. "If the *Observer* disappeared tomorrow," one hack points out, "the *Guardian* group would still be in crisis." The real causes of its financial problems are the advertising recession, the hugely expensive Berliner presses and the vast sums invested in the ever-expanding *Grauniad* website.

Still, the weekly circulars from Tim "Babbling" Brooks remain defiantly perky. "I ask you not to take seriously what our rivals are writing about us," the managing director advised in one bulletin last month. "While writing this week's column [*sic*], I have been listening through my Mac to a Brahms sonata for cello and piano." A week later he revealed that "September is my favourite month. New pencils, ripe blackberries. Leaves turn, nights cool, the air freshens." Better still, the first crop of vegetables from the "skip gardens" near the *Guardian* office had been harvested: "You can see the gardens through the windows in the hoardings across the road from the eastern entrance to St Pancras... The tomatoes are coming along nicely!"

In his next message, when not raving about "some wonderful chamber music" he heard at the Kings Place Festival, Brooks grappled with the figures in the National Readership Survey. "If, like me, you are one of those people who dropped maths after GCSE like a half-eaten apple from which a worm is protruding, I will once more recommend a duffer's guide: *Innumeracy: Mathematical Illiteracy and Its Consequences* by John Allen Paulos."

Oddly enough, staff were none too reassured to learn that their managing director needed the book.

Still, there's plenty to look forward to. As Tim Brooks writes: "I've got my eye on the visit of the Tallis scholars in October – one of the best Renaissance choral ensembles in the world." Lovely! Even if *Observer* hacks still fret about their future, at least they can do so with a song in their hearts and home-grown tomatoes in their knapsacks.

FOR Clare Hollingworth, the doyenne of war correspondents, last month marked the 70th anniversary of her first and biggest scoop for the *Daily Telegraph* – revealing the outbreak of WWII from the front line of the German invasion in Katowice, Poland, even before Polish officials knew about it.

On 10 October she will be 98, but the celebrations have been rather spoilt by the prospect of another battle, this time in the law courts in Hong Kong, where Hollingworth has lived for many years. The defendant is fellow expat Trevor Thomas, a British-born PR executive and occasional film-actor who describes himself on his website as "arguably Hong Kong's best-known English language media personality".

Having befriended Hollingworth at the Foreign Correspondents' Club, her regular watering hole, Thomas offered in January 2003 to "assist" the nonagenarian with her financial affairs. He was given control over her account at the Standard Chartered Bank, and obtained a chequebook and ATM card. The idea was that he'd save her the headache of remembering to pay domestic bills.

Large sums were soon disappearing from the account. During one five-day period that August, a total of HK$1,446,500 (about £115,000) was withdrawn by Thomas via six cheques made out to his company, himself and cash. "I quite agree: it ought to have been better ordered," Thomas tells the *Eye*. "But no one was looking after this helpless old lady until I came along. She's away with the fairies – has no idea what's going on."

Which, some might say, was why he could afford to be so slapdash in his book-keeping. Although some cheques were paid directly to Hollingworth's domestic helper, many more went to Thomas, who appears to have kept no records or receipts. What was he spending it on? "Wet fish," he tells the *Eye*. "And taxi fares from the shops. You can't walk back through the heat of a tropical summer with 40lbs of groceries in your arms." More than a million dollars' worth of food and taxis? Shome mishtake, shurely.

Hollingworth's executrix in London and her relations elsewhere in the world certainly thought so when they discovered what was going on. In 2006 they filed a writ on her behalf demanding that he account for the missing dosh. The case was settled in 2007; and although the terms of settlement are confidential, the *Eye* has learned that Thomas agreed to repay more than HK$1m. Two years on he still hasn't stumped up, so the frail *Telegraph* hack – who is now deaf and almost blind – is applying to have him declared bankrupt.

Thomas seems unabashed. "I won't be blackmailed," he says. "I can't get a million dollars out of thin air. If they bankrupt me they still won't get it." Will the *Telegraph* now lend a hand, in her hour of need, to the hack who filed its greatest scoop?

READERS of the *Daily Torygraph*'s business section were recently treated to a huge puff for a new book about the engineering group GKN.

It was written by the book's author, Andrew Lorenz, and gave an account of GKN's exciting transformation during the 1980s into "one of the first genuinely global operations in the manufacturing world".

What Lorenz neglected to tell readers during his glowing account was that he is the chairman of financial communications at the PR firm Financial Dynamics, and that one of his principal clients at the company is… GKN!

DAVID BLUNKETT's valiant quest constantly to remind voters of the shabby circumstances that led to the first of his two ignominious departures from the Cabinet five years ago continues.

Last week his lawyers demanded the *Independent* print the following correction: "We wrongly said David Blunkett had resigned from the Cabinet after trying to fast-track the visa application of his wife's nanny. The nanny in question in fact worked for his lover and although Sir Alan Budd's inquiry into the matter identified that the visa had been fast-tracked, it concluded: 'I have not been able to determine whether Mr Blunkett gave any instructions in relation to the case and if so what they were'."

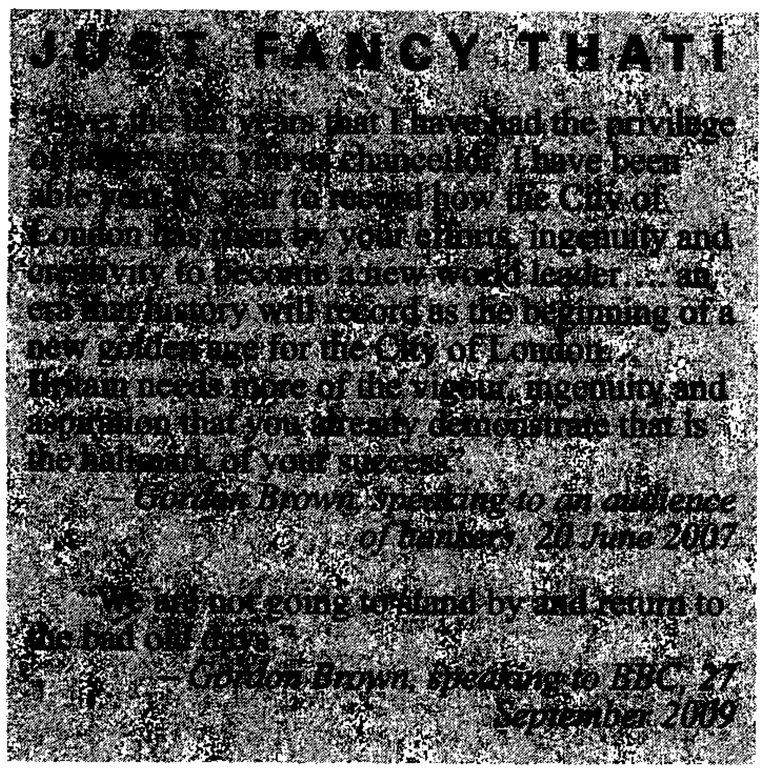
Sub-editors please write out 100 times: the woman the then home secretary impregnated was *someone else's* wife, not his own.

LORD "Tax Havens" Myners – former banker, ex-chairman of Guardian Media Group, now City minister – tells an interviewer from his old paper that executive pay in the business world is far too high, and there should be new rules on bonuses "to stop huge payouts for profits that prove to be transitory".

As he explains: "I think rewards for directors and senior management expressed in relation to awards for other people in an organisation have become more and more extended and there is no reason for this."

Myners has obviously forgotten his own time chairing the board of GMG until 2008. In his last year in charge, chief executive Carolyn McCall was rewarded with a 23 percent pay rise while *Grauniad* foot-soldiers collected just 5 percent. In addition to her £424,000 basic wage, she earned a £385,000 bonus – worth more than 90 percent of her salary!

Given GMG's performance in the following 12 months, when it posted a record loss of £89m, McCall's performance looks, er, "transitory" at best. Others in the business world appear to agree: she is having to quit as a non-executive director of Lloyds Banking Group after serving less than a year on the board.


JUST FANCY THAT!
"Over the ten years that I have had the privilege of being your chancellor, I have been able year by year to record how the City of London has risen by your efforts, ingenuity and creativity to become a new world leader ... an era that history will record as the beginning of a new golden age for the City of London ... Britain needs more of the vigour, ingenuity and aspiration that you already demonstrate that is the hallmark of your success."
– Gordon Brown, speaking to an audience of bankers, 21 June 2007
"We are not going to stand by and return to the bad old days."
– Gordon Brown, speaking to BBC, 27 September 2009

"SO many people in the Westminster village and beyond are talking about it that it seemed to me a fair question to ask," Andrew Marr told the *Telegraph* in response to howls of outrage at his daring to probe the prime minister about his medication habits.

When a newspaper dared to approach Marr himself last year about an aspect of his personal life which at the time was being widely discussed in the Westminster village and beyond, the great inquisitor responded by obtaining an injunction to stop publication (see Legal News, page 5).

Might this be what not-so-retired spin doctor Alastair Campbell was hinting at in his blog last Sunday? "I'm sure Andrew would agree that everyone has certain areas of their life that they'd prefer not to be asked about live on TV," Campbell wrote.

Marr had in fact got in early with his response to the accusation that he keeps things to himself: quizzed by shadow chancellor George Osborne in the *Guardian* on Saturday as to whether "you know lots of things you don't tell the public", Marr assured him: "I don't think there was anything of any substance that I knew for sure and didn't tell the public."

THE New Labour brand is now so devalued that at the Brighton conference the pressure group Progress had to resort to taking sponsorship cash from lobbyists for distinctly un-progressive Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan has elections but is hardly a democracy. According to the Foreign Office, international monitors "on the whole judged that they did not meet democratic standards". And Human Rights Watch has noted that "physical abuse and torture are rampant in police custody".

Still, who cares when the European Azerbaijan Society, a front for the Azeri government, is prepared to fund a "Progress" get-together discussing "Conflict and European Energy Security in the South Caucuses"? The Azeris obviously know Labour ministers care more about their oil and gas than their human rights.

PROGRESS chairman Stephen Twigg is also the director of the Foreign Policy Centre (FPC), another New Labour-focused think tank.

The FPC did manage to whip up some businesses to support its Labour conference programme: as the *Eye* went to press, climate change minister Joan Ruddock was booked to speak about a "low-carbon future" courtesy of one of the world's leading coal-mining companies, Rio Tinto. Thanks to its cash, Rio Tinto gets its spin doctor on the platform alongside Ruddock.

Meanwhile development minister Gareth Thomas was due to talk about the impact of business on development in a meeting paid for by the Coca-Cola Corporation. Coke has been accused of stealing peasants' water in India and Africa, and has been implicated in anti-union killings in Colombia and child labour in Central America, so it will be pleased that its sponsorship means its "Stakeholder Engagement" manager can say nice things about the firm on the same platform as a Labour's minister. Treble Cokes all round!

POSTCARD FROM BRIGHTON

LABOUR delegates arriving in Brighton were greeted by an "urgent call to save our planet from the Supreme Master".

Gordon Brown's latest speech? Not quite. The message, printed over two pages in *The House Magazine*, a normally staid political journal, was an advertorial from a messianic vegetarian, Ching Hai. She is a spiritual teacher of Quan Yin – not John Prescott's favourite restaurant, but a form of meditation.

Ching Hai's message added to the otherworldly feel among Labour activists. In the conference hall everyone (or rather, those who turned up) swore undying loyalty to Supreme Master Brown. But on the fringe and in the bars it was hard to find anyone prepared to support him.

At the Compass-Tribune rally, *Grauniad* columnist Polly Toynbee slagged off Broon as a useless leader, only for Compass chairman Neal Lawson to retort: "Find us a better one." Duchess Polly, with contempt: "Almost anyone." The room broke into laughter and applause.

"For God's sake just take the picture, Peter – it worked for Putin"

Tribune rallies of old, though often congenitally disloyal to the party leadership, used to be viscerally tribal to the party. But one of the speakers this year was Caroline Lucas, leader of the Green party and a candidate against Labour in the parliamentary seat of Brighton Pavilion. Cabinet minister John Denham was furious with Lawson for inviting the enemy to speak at such a venerable event. When Lawson stood up for Lucas and said "let's practise plurality", he was greeted with heckles of "rubbish!"

Rows of empty red seats greeted speakers as the conference got under way. Proceedings were being chaired by an almost comically downbeat Yorkshirewoman, Cath Speight, who plodded up to the lectern only to find her autocue was on the blink. Her name on the conference screens identified her as "Caith Speight". Great start.

Brown was sitting at the end of the platform table for dignitaries, on a chair that seemed to be a good couple of inches lower than the others. "We lost many good comrades in the recent elections," monotoned Speight, vowels leaden, face like a bloodhound. She made it sound as though they had died rather than just lost a sinecure on a local council or in the European parliament.

A group of Labour candidates filed in, as though about to be shot. They were welcomed by Lucy Powell, herself a candidate in Manchester, but the audience's applause dwindled to nothing before even half of them were on the stage. Powell was the only one clapping, her hands plopping against each other like raindrops falling on a microphone. "Keep clapping," she said with desperation.

Prizes were handed out to party stalwarts, including a gay group who had campaigned for "new fertility rites". This was later understood, in fact, to be "rights".

Several speakers blamed the press for Labour's dire fortunes. Speight said there was "no sense of fair play" from the media. "The media have written us orf," said Peter Hain, suddenly speaking like the Queen. "If we can get under the ferocious media attack we can still beat them." Plaid Cymru was also attacked by Hain. This generated bizarre cries of "the swine!" and "slimy!"

And yet the next speaker, Welsh leader Rhodri Morgan, said the party should resist "the old culture of blaming others for anything that goes wrong. That era is over. Finito. Dead as a Norwegian blue dodo."

Talking of, er, seafood, the old-world hangout of English's oyster bar was doing decent trade. When Charles "Two Dinners" Clarke bowled up to join a table of *Times* hacks, waiters braced themselves for a burst of action. Outside the restaurant, culture secretary Ben Bradshaw sucked hard on a rollie.

At one of English's upstairs tables, Tim Hames was troughing enthusiastically. Hames is the new £85,000-a-year spin doctor of Commons Speaker John Bercow, although given that he does not start work until November he was presumably flying under the colours of his old employer, the British Venture Capital Association. PR schmoozer Hames was deep in conspiratorial scoff with Lord Snape, one of the Labour peers turned over recently by the *Sunday Times*.

Outside the Grand Hotel, busy-busy ex-minister James Purnell was embracing acquaintances as though they were his dearest pals. Espying former Foreign Office minister Meg Munn, Purnell danced up to her in slow motion, both arms wide open, crying "Meg Munn! My very favourite Meg!" She did her best not to look too horrified at being kissed by dissenter Purnell.

Although the Grand's foyer was noticeably less packed than in the years of New Labour pomp, some of the comrades were still thirsty. Drinking continued until well past 4am and at breakfast the following morning, while Shaun Woodward sipped herbal infusions with *FT* editor Lionel Barber, Gordon Brown's former press officer Charlie Whelan bawled at fellow *bon vivants*. Oafish Charlie bragged not only about the previous night's adventures but also about the 12lb fish he had landed the previous week on a stretch of the Dee.

Shootin' the breeze and fishin'. Behold yesterday's elite, slip-sliding towards oblivion.

'Gavel Basher'

ORDER OF THE SARAH BROWN NOSE

"From being an awkward, near-silent, old-fashioned political consort, she has metamorphosed into a truly modern public figure: talkative, empathetic, informal but infinitely connected, ubiquitous as any celebrity, an avid exploiter of new digital media, an expert assembler of charitable and political coalitions, and an expert blurrer of the lines between them. She has become arguably the most admired and powerful woman in Britain." – *Andy Beckett,* Guardian

MORE questions for Sir Peter Viggers MP, the man with the world's most famous duck house.

Besides trying to get the taxpayer to pay for his pond-palace, Viggers also claimed more than £20,000 for "gardening". A beady eyed constituent, Michael Boltwood, spotted that the property to which the claim relates has a front garden that is shared with the occupants of the two other flats in the same building. He wrote to Viggers in May, asking whether the other occupants contributed to the cost of maintaining the garden, or merely took advantage of the publicly funded free maintenance courtesy of their kindly, silver-haired old neighbour. He also noted that the property for which the claim was made is not even in the constituency.

Viggers declined to answer any of these points, commenting only that "in a democracy you are entitled to say anything you wish to anyone". Boltwood persisted. "I do not think," Viggers wrote back, "there is any further point in corresponding with you at this stage." So Boltwood wrote to David Cameron, drawing attention to the unanswered questions. Cameron did not reply. Boltwood then wrote to Tory chairman Eric Pickles. Result! On 19 June Pickles thanked him for the tip-off and promised to be back in touch.

Since then Mr Boltwood has heard nothing, so on 10 August he contacted the office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards – only to be told that it couldn't consider his complaint. Time for Inspector Knacker to step in?

TORIES in Bexhill and Battle were relieved to read a letter from their local association president John A. Ball, telling them their local MP had been given "a clean bill of health" by Tory HQ over the expenses scandal.

Shadow environment minister Greg Barker "has not abused the system", party members were told. "We think it of absolute importance that in the general disrepute into which Members of Parliament have fallen that we continue to distinguish between those who abused the system, some criminally, and those who have not." Greg, the letter made clear, had not.

Is this the same Greg Barker who designated a flat in Chelsea as his second home in April 2004, claimed £2,148 on curtains and lighting for the riverside address, and then switched his second-home allowance eight months later to a new property he bought in Pimlico? It certainly is.

Barker then claimed £15,875 for stamp duty and other purchase costs for this new flat, and later made a claim for £12,452 for work done on it (the claim was refused for being late). He claimed £27,928 in mortgage payments on the Pimlico flat over two years, then sold it for a £320,000 profit. He then moved back into his original flat.

He has now agreed to make an undisclosed "voluntary" donation to the Inland Revenue since public money helped fund this neat shimmy up the property ladder. A spotless bill of health indeed!

NEW LABOUR's slow death is reflected by the changing priorities of industry lobbyists who are increasingly cosying up to the Tories ahead of next year's general election.

Construction giant Balfour Beatty, for example, is using Weber Shandwick to reach out to Call Me Dave's team. Balfour executives were mysteriously unavailable for a planned dinner with Labour MPs next month, so the firm and its lobbyists considered "whether to abandon this dinner and possibly replace entire dinner with Tory equivalent" instead.

Balfour Beatty's spokesman said this was "just a diary issue". But a confidential lobbying summary received by the *Eye*, which covers March to October this year, says Weber Shandwick "facilitated" twice as many Balfour Beatty meetings with the Tories as it did with Labour.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

IN MARCH the European parliament proudly inaugurated two new Brussels buildings to house its ever-expanding travelling circus of members, assistants and bureaucrats. But the parliament is less happy to boast, or even talk, about the financing arrangements behind the construction of the Willy Brandt and József Antall buildings which it leases.

In 2004 the parliament signed a whopping €284m deal with a Belgian developer which, shortly before, exercised an option to buy the land on which the buildings now stand. Under the deal, the developer was to raise the finance to fund construction.

Because of this, says the parliament, a public procurement process was not required for the financing bids. The developer oversaw it all, soliciting bids for the financing under which the buildings would be built, leased and eventually sold to the parliament. This is like buying a house and asking the seller to arrange the mortgage for you. Whose best interests will the seller look after?

The parliament has so far refused to release documents related to the deal. Many documents are held by the developer, and, the parliament says, cannot therefore be made public. The parliament holds a report by accountants KPMG on the financing bids assembled by the developer but will not release this either, citing commercial confidentiality.

The EU ombudsman has now weighed in, saying the parliament should release the report and other documents, or "give convincing explanations for not doing so" – the implication being that explanations so far have not been convincing. Will the parliament clear up these muddy waters? It has until the end of the month to respond.

Such as the EU constitution

HOW LOBBYING WORKS

"Priti Patel, the Conservative candidate for Witham and formerly a senior aide to William Hague, has returned to the firm of Weber Shandwick, whose clients include Barclays, since being selected in November 2006. 'I don't do lobbying,' she said. 'However, that does not mean I won't phone up a Member of Parliament and say this client or that has an issue and would you be willing to speak with them? I will also give my clients a particular insight into the party'." – The *Times*, 25 September.

NICK CLEGG – you remember him, Lib Dem leader – reckoned he had had a good conference, buoyantly declaring in his closing speech: "I want to be Prime Minister."

Any confidence he felt, however, must have ebbed away when he read the next day's *Times*, where the kiss of death arrived courtesy of the world's worst futurologist, Anatole Kaletsky.

"Let me try to forecast some of the main events that will probably happen in the months ahead," Kaletsky wrote, undeterred by a record that includes such prophecies as "the credit crunch seems to be ending" (June 2008); "There will be no US recession" (January 2008); and "Obama would lose to McCain" (April 2008).

"Labour loyalists will have to start taking seriously my argument, now gaining attention among the chattering classes, that the 2010 election may set off a once-in-a-century upheaval in the structure of British politics, with the Liberal Democrats displacing Labour as the dominant party of the Left." Clegg's fate is surely sealed.

TREVOR PHILLIPS' Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) receives £70m a year from taxpayers. So it's refreshing to learn that it chose to spend between £5,000 and £10,000 of the money treating some 200 fat cats to a lavish three-course lunch at a *Spectator* magazine conference last month.

It was money well spent, of course, as chairman Phillips got to have his picture printed on the menu and had a seat on one of the discussion panels too.

It was assumed he was trying to cosy up to the Tories to protect his position come the next quango-bashing regime. But to be on the safe side, he is also looking after his old friends at the *Grauniad*. The EHRC has just given Guardian Public (the newspaper's online magazine for public sector managers) a contract for running conferences and a website said to be worth £130,000. EHRC refuses to confirm the six-figure sum on the grounds of "commercial confidentiality".

SO. Farewell then EDS. The disaster-prone IT outsourcing firm was bought by giant HP last year and last week the parent company abandoned the 47-year-old brand, pulling down flags and replacing signs at their US HQ with the shiny new name: "HP Enterprise Systems".

The *Eye*'s favourite computer firm was responsible for numerous government IT fiascos in the UK, including the pisspoor unified forces payroll system, the Child Support Agency debacle and the tax credits cock up (*Eyes passim*). But the company name was also tarnished in the US, where it was damaged by a disastrous and expensive IT project for the US Navy in 2004.

But just as no one was ever taken in by the name change from Windscale to Sellafield, or from Royal Mail to Consignia (and back again), will a new logo make EDS any less useless?

OIL TRADING

FULL marks for resilience to Adam Tudor, the partner in Messrs Carter-Fuck who acts for the oil trading company Trafigura.

He must have had a stressful couple of weeks, what with gruesome front-page stories about the toxic waste dumped in the Ivory Coast by one of Trafigura's sub-contractors, a thunderous *Guardian* editorial about Carter-Fuck's "disgraceful attempts" to intimidate hacks who dared question Trafigura's version of events, and then the settlement of a class-action lawsuit brought by 30,000 Ivorians against the company. Trafigura, without admitting liability, has agreed to pay them £30m.

Lesser lawyers might have felt rather battered by all this unflattering attention, but Tudor is made of sterner stuff. Last week the *Eye* sent him two questions: "Knowing what you now know about Trafigura, are you still proud and happy to represent them? If so, is there *anyone* you wouldn't represent?" Back came the reply: "I refer to the questions which you sent me yesterday. In reverse order, I comment as follows. Yes, there are plenty of people and organisations that my firm refuses to represent. Yes, we are very happy to represent Trafigura."

Splendid!

NUMBER CRUNCHING

25% Reduction in number of Trident-carrying submarines announced by Gordon Brown last week

4% Reduction in estimated cost of Trident replacement programme this will actually produce

TV

Strictly Come Dancing (BBC1)

Strictly Come Dancing – It Takes Two (BBC2)

IT'S a basic rule of Hollywood that there's no way of predicting what's going to be a hit: in the aphorism of the screenwriter William Goldman, "nobody knows anything".

BBC executives, though, have achieved a surprising extension to this maxim by proving that, even if you've achieved a sure-fire 100 percent hit, there's absolutely no guarantee that it will remain one.

Take **Strictly Come Dancing**. Having gained in profile year after year, the pro-am hoof show looked a reliable feel-good fixture in the autumn 2009 schedules, a rare unarguable reason for licence-fee payers to be happy about the BBC. But, inevitably, managers have managed to cock it up with a series of increasingly familiar mistakes.

One: Arrogance. Falling prey to the frequent TV illusion that a successful show could become even more successful with a few tweaks (ideally making it more like another hit show), the Corporation's showbiz barons sacked 66-year-old judge Arlene Phillips and replaced her with the much younger, much dumber Alesha Dixon, in what was clearly a shameless attempt to court the *X Factor* audience.

This has turned out to be a PR disaster even by the standards of an institution that specialises in them. The bosses of the tinsel division had failed to realise that, in the age of blog and twitter, a few annoyed viewers can, with the help of a couple of mischievous newspapers, turn a high-handed decision into a full-scale shit-storm. It's now so common a view that Phillips was the victim of a get-the-grannies initiative at TV Centre that the DG has been forced to declare that the news will be read in future by at least one geriatric granny, thus completely reversing the long-time plan to put the bulletins in the hands of yummie youngies.

But, as if the dismissal of Phillips wasn't enough hubris, the bosses proceeded to schedule the opening editions of *Strictly* directly against *The X Factor* on ITV1, although the target audience was likely to overlap, especially since Ms Dixon had been brought in to lure them.

The problem here was that the top bods in telly have been to too many TV conferences where the boffins claim that, with increasing self-scheduling time-delay viewing, clashes don't matter like they used to. This is theoretically true but, in practice, huge numbers of viewers still like to watch the big reality shows as they go out, and the BBC's many enemies in the press and at Westminster saw another chance to attack the Corporation for imperious behaviour.

Two: Gigantism. The problem with the early editions is not just that they are up against a commercial rival, but also that they are so long and there are so many of them. The first four shows in the new run stretched to almost two hours each in Friday and then Saturday peak-time. Two of the later editions will reportedly be padded out to two-and-a-quarter hours.

These decisions were clearly taken to maximise the impact and presence in the schedules of a ratings winner, rather than allocating the space that is justified by the content. It's especially stupid to expand the early stages of a reality series in this way because elimination shows notoriously don't really get going until much later on, when the duffers are removed and the interesting participants emerge.

By last Friday night's instalment, each hour had more padding than a batsman facing a pace attack. Each element – Brucie's patter, rehearsal footage, dancing, judging, voting – had been dragged out in a desperate attempt to fill the huge gap between the start and finish times printed in *Radio Times*.

And it's not just the show itself that feels over-stretched.

There's also more and more of the elaborate support apparatus, including **Strictly Come Dancing: It Takes Two**, the self-declared "fanzine" in which Claudia Winkleman asks vacuous questions to competing and eliminated couples (though pointedly ignoring tabloid speculation over which ones may be shagging) and chats over the prospects with vapid celebrities. At least Friday's edition was enlivened by Johnny Vaughan blatantly ignoring what had clearly been a warning from producers not to publicise his Capital Radio breakfast show.

Three: Humourlessness. Although it's nearly three decades since the BBC was rightly mocked for including the shooting of JR Ewing in *Dallas* on the main evening news, its tin ear for irony continues and the return of *Strictly* was duly featured in the bulletins. They think this is cute and amusing, but viewers already angry at the quantity of advertising trails between programmes are furious to find them turning up on the news.

Unfortunately, this sense-of-humour failure also increasingly afflicts *Strictly Come Dancing* itself. Ever since the beginning, Bruce has done bad jokes but, with the amount of time to be filled in the mammoth cash-in editions, they're getting ever more frequent and laboured. On Saturday night, there was one about "hieroglyphics" that would have been thought lame in an infant school playground. Brucie even asked co-host Tess Daly at one point to "pinch me and tell me I'm not dreaming". Then, when she pretended to pinch him in the back, he squealed: "Not there!"

The judges also rely ever more on leaden puns: "Bowled over!" for Tuffers, and "Dunwoody? Done-goody!" for the jockey who fell off this week. "I feel something growing – big and powerful!," spouts camp Bruno, as he so often has before. The viewer feels something small and shrinking – a classic Beeb cock-up in the handling of a long-running show.

'Remote Controller'

"There's your commission for another series of 'Derren Brown'"

MEDIA NEWS

YET more chaos at BBC News following the £2bn "Value for Money" outsourcing of phones and computer systems to Siemens (*Eyes passim*).

At White City more than half the phones and computers "lost connectivity" following a "power outage" and "unknown network fault". BBC staff used their own mobiles to plead for at least the lights to be switched back on. Siemens engineers concluded after several hours: "It has become apparent that the network issues are much more widespread than earlier reports suggested."

A few days later Siemens attempted a software upgrade that "adversely affected" the software used to fill in compliance forms for Ofcom. Following the Ross/Brand affair, no BBC programme can be transmitted unless a form is sent to the regulator confirming that it "complies" with Ofcom rules. None could be sent.

Producers wonder how long it will be before programmes fall off air due to Siemens' technical wizardry.

BEFORE setting off on any assignment, BBC camera crews have to fill in a mandatory "Hazard Assessment Form". This is important in "high-risk" areas such as Afghanistan but less so, one might think, for jobs in agreeable places such as Fulham.

Following the death of the chef Keith Floyd, a crew was sent to record an interview with Marco Pierre White in the south-west London borough. The form was duly filled in and checked by the "Occupational Risk team", which replied with the following: "Bring warm, wet weather clothing if weather looks unpredictable" and "take care with moving traffic when getting in and out of the truck".

Perhaps because of Marco Pierre White's reputation for temper tantrums, they also advised: "If a scrum is expected, each crew must be accompanied by a backwatcher."

BIRTSPEAK 2.0

"I have today announced a restructuring of the FM&T Audio & Music & Mobile groups. We will be shifting towards a Product focus that will include an increased emphasis on product strategy and long-term planning for the products and services we are responsible for creating and delivering. We currently focus our efforts around project delivery, without enough emphasis on strategic planning. This will help us design audience-facing propositions, or business-facing enablers as required, which will deliver against our pan-BBC objectives… This change also means that we clarify for our partners from editorial and content divisions with whom they should collaborate, which will ensure our editorial and technological plans are aligned, and that together we are meeting shared objectives to achieve targets." – *Email from Mark Kortekaas, FM Controller, Audio and Music and Mobile, BBC.*

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1

Anne Robinson: In history, what was the official language of ancient Rome?
Contestant: Greek.
AR: In written communication, which country's name is an acronym for "I trust and love you"?
Contestant: Germany.
AR: In which European country is the Neander valley?
Contestant: Africa.
AR: A peak in the Andes was confirmed by an expedition in 2000 as the source of which major river?
Contestant: The Nile.

Wogan's Perfect Recall, C4

Terry Wogan: The Spanish Steps and the Colosseum lie in which Italian city?
Contestant: Greece.

I - B S K Y B

"The ever-desperate BBC will come to regret putting *Strictly* straight up against *X Factor.* I can't think of a better advert for viewers to get a Sky Plus box and watch both." – Fraser Nelson, *News of the World.*

RUPERT MURDOCH'S papers are hysterical with outrage at the scheduling of *Strictly Come Dancing* against ITV's *X Factor.* "The BBC have let down Britain, says Simon Cowell," boomed the front page of the *Sun* on 19 September.

An editorial that day complained: "ITV needs audiences to stay in business. But the BBC's massive income is guaranteed by taxpayers whatever time *Strictly* goes out." The *Times* joined the shrieking chorus three days later with a leading article: "The BBC should not be seeking to deprive ITV of prime-time ratings. When ITV loses viewers, it loses income."

This isn't just routine Beeb-baiting. What the papers omitted to mention in their coverage is that ITV's biggest shareholder is Rupert Murdoch's Sky TV, which controversially holds a 17.9 percent stake in its rival. Since those ITV shares are worth just a third of the price that Sky paid three years ago – currently a loss of around £600m – the Murdochs have good reason to worry about ITV losing income.

On the other hand, they don't want it becoming rampantly successful either, which is why they're celebrating the failure of former BSkyB chief executive Tony Ball to become the new boss of ITV. Ball was so highly rated at Sky that when he left in 2003 he was given a £10m pay-off by Murdoch to stop him working for another UK broadcaster for three years. Even now the prospect of Ball running ITV was alarming for Sky bosses, not least because he was expected to expand into their core market of pay-TV.

In theory, Sky could have tried to block Ball's appointment by wielding its 17.9 percent shareholding. But in practical terms that was impossible because Sky insists it is a benign investor in its rival and is in the midst of trying to overturn a legal ruling that it must sell the shares.

However, other parts of the Murdoch empire were more forthright as Ball and ITV inched closer to a deal over the weekend of 19/20 September, with the *Sunday Times* stoking up anger about the size of his proposed £30m remuneration deal over five years. "Ball is attempting to negotiate one of the biggest and most controversial pay packages awarded to a media chief executive," it harrumphed, forgetting that he earned more than that in four years running Sky.

As it turned out, Ball blew his own chances with the ITV board at the last minute by demanding a power of veto over the choice of the next chairman. Sighs of relief and trebles all round at Sky!

AT the end of August the *Guardian* reported that Sky.com was to shut seven websites because they weren't making any money. James Murdoch whinged that it was all the BBC's fault and nothing to do with Sky's own pisspoor online content that no one wants to read.

But what's this? On "*Guardian* Jobs" an advert appears for deputy editor of TV Online at the very same Sky.com. "You will be relied upon," it notes, "to push the site's editorial direction at a time of expansion." A time of *what?* The poor saps being "let go" as a result of the website closures will certainly take some convincing.

Sky317 Virgin419
7.00 AM Young Man With A Horn (1950) 9.00 Not With My Wife, You Don't! (1966) *TV Choice, TCM*

WHEN *One Show* presenter Adrian Chiles was offered a job as lead football presenter at ITV Sport, he turned down the opportunity despite being offered a multi-million-pound contract. This was taken by the press as a sign of Chiles's loyalty to the BBC, and he emphasised in interviews how much he loved his BBC job.

Strange, then, to discover details of a quieter deal made between him and ITV. Chiles has agreed to front ITV's football bloopers Christmas DVD with the proviso that his agents, Avalon Entertainment, produce the whole DVD, an exercise likely to bring the company a six-figure sum. Chiles will personally receive a high five-figure cheque for his involvement. A nice festive gift for Auntie's loyal anchorman!

"It's live pictures from the Conference of Labour ministers in power"

P O P E Y E

SO. AFTER the hype, the 700-plus articles in the national press, the special pull-outs and souvenir covers, the series of BBC documentaries and the themed weekend on Radio 2, how fares the "new Beatlemania" two weeks on from the re-release of the band's albums and the launch of their new computer game?

"We feel there's every chance that the Beatles will dominate the top 20 next week. Chances are *Sgt Pepper* and *Abbey Road* will battle it out for the No 1 spot," promised HMV spokesman Gennaro Castaldo, announcing that the chain's stores would open early "to accommodate expected demand".

"The Beatles edition of Rock Band… is certain to become a bestseller," promised the *Guardian*. "Bookmakers expect one of the individual CDs, probably *Revolver*, to top the official album charts." The *Sunday Express* was even more certain: "Pre-orders of their 14 CDs, which have all been digitally remastered, will send the Beatles back to No 1. Some industry experts predict the Beatles could have the top ten places in the CD charts by the end of the week. The game is expected to sell out within days."

"Beatlemania is back – blasting the Fab Four back into the Top Ten with a whopping 50,000 sales of their sparkling reissues in just one day," yelped the *Sun*. "And with the special-edition Beatles Rock Band computer game flying off the shop shelves, too, the next month is shaping up to match their Sixties heyday."

Or not, as it turns out. While EMI was boasting last week of "global sales topping 2.25m", performance in a Beatles-weary UK have been way below expectations. Four albums – including another reissue of even more ancient material from Vera Lynn – outsold the Beatles in the first week the re-released LPs were on sale, with *Sgt Pepper* and *Abbey Road* charting at five and six respectively. The following week saw not a single Beatles album in the top ten, while celebrity cuckold Peter Andre's new album went in at No 3. By this week they had dropped out of the top 30 altogether.

In the computer game charts, meanwhile, Beatles Rock Band was roundly trounced by its direct competitor Guitar Hero 5 as well as two other titles. It currently doesn't feature in the top ten.

A D N A U S E A M

NEXT year's football World Cup in South Africa promises several mouthwatering encounters, including Coke vs Pepsi, Adidas vs Nike and the occasional game of football if the marketing tournament gets too boring.

Coca-Cola fired the opening salvo last week with the announcement of its global marketing campaign, which will be based on the theme of fans' and players' goal celebrations.

Cameroon's ageless striker Roger Milla, who shot to fame for his corner-flag jigs in Italia 90, will feature in the TV ads, which are backed up by the "Coca-Cola World Cup Celebration Award". Each time a footballer celebrates a goal with a dance, Coca-Cola will upload the celebration to a site where fans can vote for their favourite. The company will donate money to charity for each goal celebration.

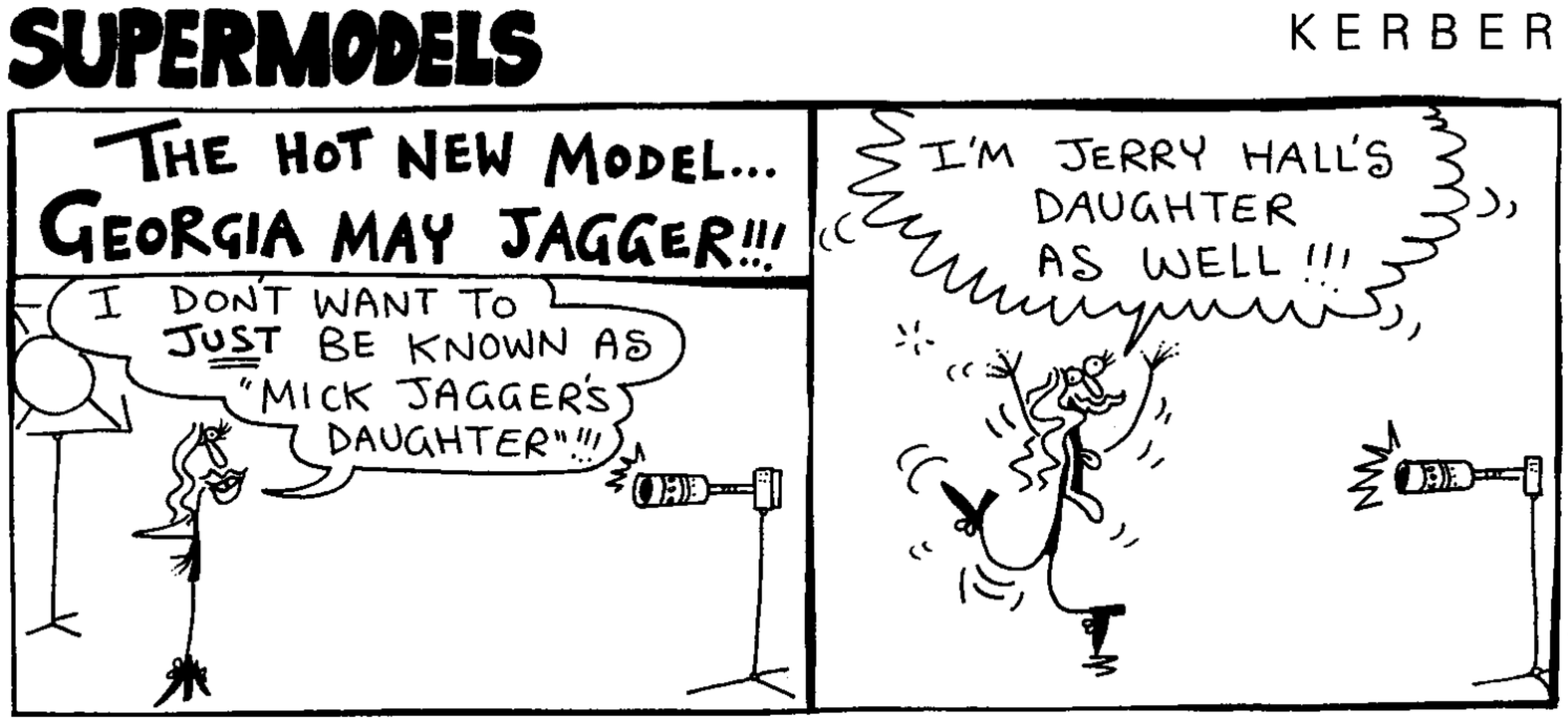
The campaign was launched at Fifa's Zurich headquarters, and it was all going swimmingly until someone mentioned the small matter of the rules of football. Law 12 of Fifa's Laws of the Game says that goal celebration's "must not be excessive. Reasonable celebrations are allowed, but the practice of choreographed celebrations is not to be encouraged when it results in excessive time-wasting and referees are instructed to intervene in such cases."

As Coca-Cola has been sponsoring Fifa since 1978, spends millions on global advertising and bankrolls the Coca-Cola FIFA World Cup Trophy Tour that precedes the tournament, it seems likely that the laws of football will be overlooked on this occasion.

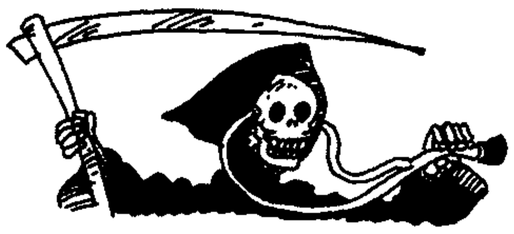
T H E S M A L L P R I N T

Packard Bell's EasyNote Butterfly notebook: "If your world is full of colour, fun and friendship wherever you go, you need a notebook that will last more than 8 hours*"

** Up to 8 hours' battery life*


SUPERMODELS
KERBER
THE HOT NEW MODEL... GEORGIA MAY JAGGER!!!
I DON'T WANT TO JUST BE KNOWN AS "MICK JAGGER'S DAUGHTER"!!!
I'M JERRY HALL'S DAUGHTER AS WELL!!!

MEDICINE BALLS



Irregulation Pt 1

THE General Medical and Nursing and Midwifery councils currently require doctors and nurses from English-speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and the USA to pass an English language test before applying for registration in the UK.

It can take months to get a test slot; but the six-hour examination of your native tongue "ensures that all overseas applicants meet the same language standard in a system that is equitable, fair and non-discriminatory."

Only it isn't. Under European legislation, neither the GMC nor the NMC can ask any "nationals from members states of the European Economic Area" to take a language test, no matter how crap their English is. Local primary care trusts (PCTs) can insist on a test but few do.

Dr Daniel Obani, a German doctor, gave a fatal overdose of pethidine to David Gray in February 2008 after confusing it with morphine. In 2007, he had been refused permission to work as an NHS GP by Leeds PCT because he failed to score sufficient marks in his language test. However, he remained registered with the GMC and joined the Cornwall GP list, which did not require such a test, before signing up with an agency called Cimarron to work as a locum for a private company, Take Care Now (TCN), which has an out-of-hours contract with Cambridgeshire NHS.

Obani is now working back in Germany, after opting to be prosecuted in his own country rather than the UK. He was given a fine and a suspended sentence. His motivation for coming to the UK was the money (£150 an hour), a mark of the difficulty PCTs have in getting out-of-hours cover since responsibility for it was taken away from local GP practices, many of whom were providing safe, cost-efficient, compassionate and intelligible care by working in cooperatives. Time to reinvent them, perhaps?

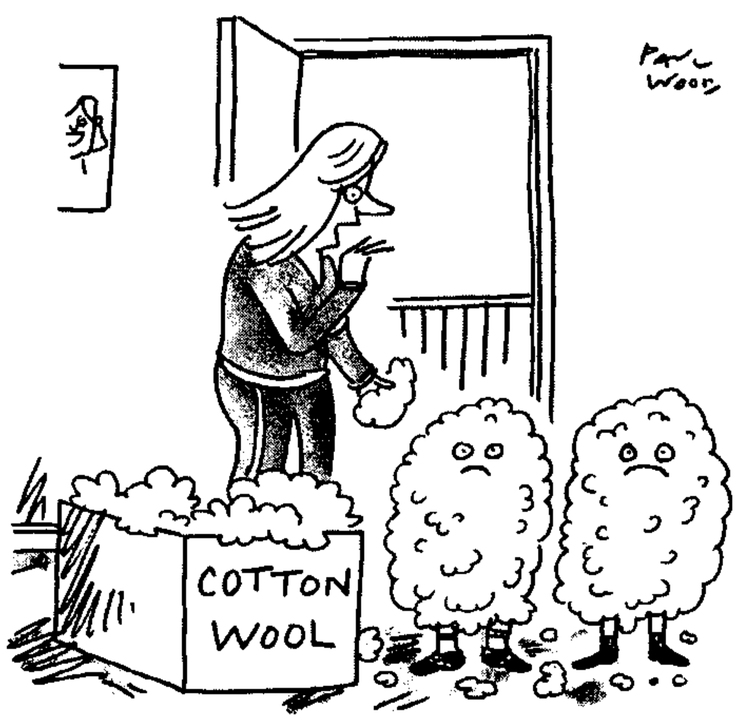
Irregulation Pt 2

THE GMC has issued a puzzling statement about a paediatric pathologist employed by United Hospitals Bristol (UHB).

According to the GMC: "We received information from UHB in 2004 regarding [Dr X]. It became clear that conducting our normal investigations was going to take longer than was in the public interest. We therefore decided to remove the doctor from the register with his agreement. The doctor was removed from the register in December 2004 and has not been registered with the GMC since that date. This means that he has not been able to practise as a doctor in the UK since 2004."

M.D. has asked the GMC to clarify how it can be in the public interest not to investigate serious concerns about patient safety, but without reply. One argument used locally to silence dissenters is "the last thing Bristol needs is another scandal." In fact, the last thing Bristol needs is another cover-up. Jane Mishcon, chair of the UHB pathology review (see last *Eye*), has a lot of digging to do. Meanwhile, "Dr X" is now working abroad and his website still cites his role as "clinical reader" at Bristol as one of his achievements.

M.D.



"I'll be down in a minute, darling... I'm just making sure the kids are wrapped up for school"

ECO GNOMICS

Virgin on the ridiculous

A FEW months after Virgin launched its "Climate Change ISA" (with the lure of 5,000 free airmiles on Virgin Atlantic for the first buyers, as *Eye* 1234 reported), where is all this green money being invested?

As the Virgin Money website boasts: "The Virgin Climate Change ISA invests in specially selected businesses… who aim to drive outstanding profit growth and have a lighter environmental footprint." Really? Unfortunately for eco-conscious investors, Virgin's screening process doesn't filter out those famously light-footed firms in the, er, oil and defence industries.

"No industry exclusion filters means we include all industries – so you don't miss out on lucrative sectors," runs the blurb. The company tries to maintain some credibility by talking up a "green filter" which selects companies "with good environmental credentials" for the final portfolio. But what is this filter, and why is it hidden away in the depths of the Virgin Money website?

Any reader who chances upon it will discover that the fund invests primarily in European equities – "in all sectors to develop a portfolio of securities of companies which benefit... from pursuing environmentally aware capitalism. For example, companies… promoting environmentally aware behaviour internally, such as encouraging recycling in their workplaces, adopting a carbon emission offsetting programme or recycling side products such as the re-injection of CO2 in oil exploration."

This suggests an oil or defence company could get into the Virgin Money Climate Change ISA fund simply by "encouraging" employees to have a recycling bin in the office. So has Virgin has found a way to avoid such embarrassment? Er, no.

Incredibly, stocks held by the fund include such environmentally friendly champions as Tullow Oil, BAE Systems, BHP Billiton, Total Oil and Arcelor Mittal. Certainly all of them have done some work to reduce their environmental footprints (very few companies haven't); and legislation requires them to reduce their carbon emissions anyway. So to pretend that savers with a "Climate Change ISA" are somehow investing in a low carbon climate friendly future is just old-fashioned greenwash.

In reality their money is going straight into the pockets of big old polluters rather than to the growing portfolio of clean technology and environmental innovation firms. Essentially Virgin picks the best of a bad bunch and dresses it up as eco-banking. Doubtless the company's green credentials will be given a further boost by Sir Richard Branson's much hyped ambitions in another famously low carbon industry – Formula 1 motorsport!

Letter from **Chisinau**

from Our Own Correspondent

IN MOLDOVA, there are no stag parties of pissed-up British youth; and camera-toting American and Japanese tourists are absent too.

We are protected from these vulgar clichés of the new Europe at least partly because of our small size (there are just four million of us); our poverty (we rank below many Asian countries and even some African ones in the GDP league); and thanks to our geographical obscurity, which sees us wedged between Romania and Ukraine.

But another reason has been our determined attachment to the old ways.

In this part of eastern Europe the Red Flag still flies. For the last eight years we have enjoyed not just Communist rule, but an administration that has more in common with the collectivist leanings of Joseph Stalin than the liberalising tendencies of Mikhail Gorbachev.

Reactionaries ready to destroy our socialist utopia won a majority of seats in parliamentary elections in July, and in September our constitutional court ruled against attempts by the Communists to install their man - Vladimir Voronin – as president. Yet the Liberal Democrats, who appear set to lead a new coalition, are in no mood to celebrate.

Alexandru Tanase, the new justice minister and the party's modestly titled prime vice-president, blames the Communists for a ruinous €500m budget deficit. A lawyer by training, he also plans an assault on our Soviet-style commercial judiciary, as archaic as it is corrupt.

Our new political rulers are sombre but enthusiastic about embracing western capitalist ideals and methods. Visiting dignitaries and journalists from across the EU are routinely paraded around our capital, Chisinau, and its environs where they are presented with state-of-the-art examples of Moldovan industry – all, of course, ripe for investment.

Ironically for a landlocked country whose culinary delights focus on boiled, grilled or roasted meat (much of which is of the road-kill variety), a stellar example of local innovation is a Chisinau fish-packing factory where row after row of young girls diligently slice, dice and then pickle herring and other delicacies of the deep that have been imported from Holland and Norway.

Is the gruff fish-factory owner concerned about diminishing stocks and the possibility of EU quotas? Of course, he says, with an air of serious concern, before brusquely motioning his 16-year-old daughter – who acts as the factories "marketing manager" – to pour the western guests another ice-cold glass of neat vodka.

Economic, political and cultural reform is but just part of the challenge that holds back foreign investors, alas. Moldova is a latter day Freedonia, but without the jokes. Take Transnistria, a separatist strip between the Dniester River and the Ukrainian border. A ceasefire has just about held since violence in 1992, but tensions often run high. Then there is Gagauzia, about two hours' drive south from the capital. This is another semi-autonomous region within our small boundaries, populated by descendants of ethnic Turkics.

We have a deal that preserves the peace by allowing the Gagauzians their own administration and a fair degree of self-determination. But these chaps speak Russian before Romanian, our own language, and have no fondness for our brothers to the west. Any suggestion Moldova's enthusiasm for Europe may also herald closer ties with Bucharest would be tantamount to fighting talk.

For in addition to fears of domination in a Romanian-dominated super-state, Gagauzians are traditionalists. Fondness for central planning and the proletariat is just a part of it. Imagine, as some young folk from the region do, the perfect wedding: with the open top cars and fine clothes, what could be more splendid than the solemn laying of flowers before the statue in the main square of Gagauzia's most respected hero, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

Well, at least it isn't Uncle Joe.

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

RECKLESS ERYC

IN 2005 we told how departing East Riding of Yorkshire (Eryc) council chief executive Darryl Stephenson had been succeeded, after a rigorous and transparent recruitment process, by his chum Nigel Pearson, the council's former "director of corporate resources" (*Eye* 1142). Pearson's old job was taken by Sue Lockwood, who coincidentally is Stephenson's wife.

Four years on, rigour and transparency continue to guide Eryc's recruitment processes, and not just for the top jobs. Recently the council advertised for "an interim communications manager (maternity cover)" at a salary of £38,575. The application process whittled the candidates down to a shortlist of six, all of a high standard.

The interviewing panel members were surprised when, on the day of the interviews, chief exec Pearson announced that he would be joining them. At the end of the day he declared that none of the candidates was suitable, overriding protests from his colleagues.

The job was then awarded to a local company, Mercury Design and Marketing, for which Eryc's Conservative leader, Stephen Parnaby OBE, just happens to work. According to Mercury's website, Parnaby delivers communications training courses to councils starting at £1,750 plus VAT for half a day, "alongside Simon Taylor, one of the country's leading local government communications experts" [*sic*]. Taylor is a former head of PR for Eryc.

Mercury Design and Marketing was incorporated last December, shortly before another local PR outfit, TAS Communications, headed by Simon Taylor, went into voluntary liquidation, leaving a long list of creditors who were owed nearly £350,000 in total. Among the printers, couriers, etc, were, er, East Riding of Yorkshire council (£1,225), HM Revenue and Customs (£231,409.31) and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations local government group (£4,828.08), which exists to "promote standards of professional excellence in this field". Indeed.

For the first few weeks of its life, Mercury was called TAS Creative, changing its name on 2 February 2009 – four days before TAS Communications went into voluntary liquidation. "TAS" are the initials of the failed company's directors – Taylor, Andy Acum (editor of Eryc's propaganda rag *East Riding News*) and Matt Stephenson, a director both of TAS and Mercury. With all those angry creditors about, Taylor has perhaps been wise not to become a director of Mercury. Apart from Stephenson, the only other director is one Kelly Todd... Taylor's girlfriend. How cosy.

DON'T PANITZKE!

THINGS are so bad at Tower Hamlets that the borough's affable communications supremo, Charles Skinner, has thrown in the towel and returned whence he came... to scandal-free Haringey!

Last year Skinner had to deal with the questionable appointment of the second-rate Lutfur Ali as his boss (*Eye* 1219) and then witnessed the forced departure of respected chief executive Martin Smith (*Eye* 1238). Earlier this year, Haringey asked him to return on secondment to handle the aftermath of the Baby P scandal. So much more straightforward was work at Haringey, which Skinner had left in 2007, he decided to stay on.

His "interim" replacement is a woman called Alex Louis, who – surprise – is a consultant at Verve Communications, the PR outfit founded by Lorraine Langham (*Eyes passim*), former PR chief of Tower Hamlets and now right-hand woman to her mate Christine Gilbert at Ofsted.

When Langham left for Ofsted, she issued a pious statement saying she had sold all her shares in Verve to avoid any conflict of interest. Indeed. What she did not say was that the shares were acquired by her husband, Leon Panitzke, who just happens to be a director of, er, Verve Communications.

HASTA LA VISTA, WALESY!

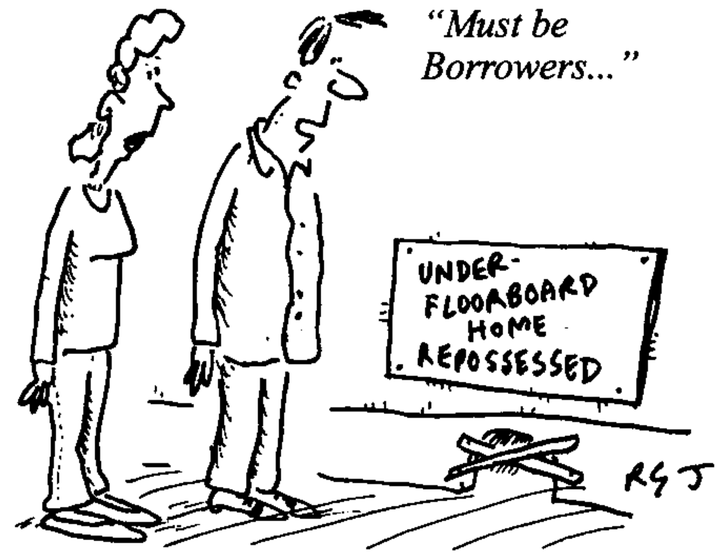
THE LATEST publicity stunt by Newham mayor "Sir" Robin Wales is to invite Arnold Schwarzenegger to be the borough's guest at the 2012 Olympics.

Schwarzenegger's Newham connection, such as it is, goes back to the 1960s, when as a young bodybuilder he trained for a while at a local gym. Some residents think a better choice might have been former world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis, who was born and brought up in Newham (before his family moved to Canada) and won a gold medal at the Seoul Olympics in 1988. He also happens to be black – perhaps a better reflection of the ethnic diversity of the borough than a white Austrian. Whatever. Arnie it is.

Sir Robin tells the local rag he is looking forward to discussing local government finance with the great man. He says he has identified ways £70m can be saved in Newham over three years. This should mightily impress the governor of California, who recently announced $15 *billion* cuts in the sunny but stony-broke state. Sir Robin's £70m is equivalent to just 0.27 percent of California's predicted $26bn deficit. But no doubt Arnie, if he comes, will appreciate the advice.

● **SOMEONE else with a headache over Tower Hamlets is London Labour party supremo Ken Clark, who has to whittle down the 140-plus would-be councillors for the borough's 51 seats to a list of acceptable candidates from which the worst of the crooks, vote-riggers and Islamists have been eliminated.**

No easy task. Clark recently received an email claiming to be from a long-standing Labour party member that made various allegations against a number of potential candidates. It alleged that one was deeply involved in people trafficking and video piracy; that another, Kabir Ahmed, is registered to vote at an address where he does not live; and that a third, Anisur Rahman, the party's branch secretary for Bethnal Green South, had encouraged colleagues to take part in postal voting irregularities. A copy of the email also found its way to local Tory leader Peter Golds, who did his duty and passed it on to Inspector Knacker, who is now on the case.



FUCK OFF, THEN

A TWO-YEAR campaign by Somerset county council's former chief executive, Alan Jones, to hound out his chief critic at County Hall, former Cllr Paul Buchanan (*Eye* 1235), cost taxpayers more than £200,000.

FoI inquiries reveal that the local government watchdog Standards for England (the new, illiterate name for our old friend the Standards Board for England) spent £185,000 investigating dozens of allegations made by Jones. He accused Buchanan of, among other things, secretiveness, undermining staff, aggressive and threatening behaviour, rudeness, intimidation, anger, disrespect, fraud, sexism, racism, homophobia and abuse of elected office.

The allegations by Jones – motto "Fit In or Fuck Off" (FiFo) – were made at a time when Buchanan looked likely to become council leader and oust the chief executive at a critical juncture for the useless outsourcing project he championed, Southwest One (*Eyes passim*). The complaints led to three investigations lasting six, 12 and 18 months. Some 40 witnesses were interviewed by SfE.

Roughly half the eye-watering bill for Jones's paranoid vendetta, £94,000, was trousered by m'learned friends. A further £17,500 was incurred by the Adjudications Panel for England on convening two hearings to examine allegations which SfE had not already thrown out.

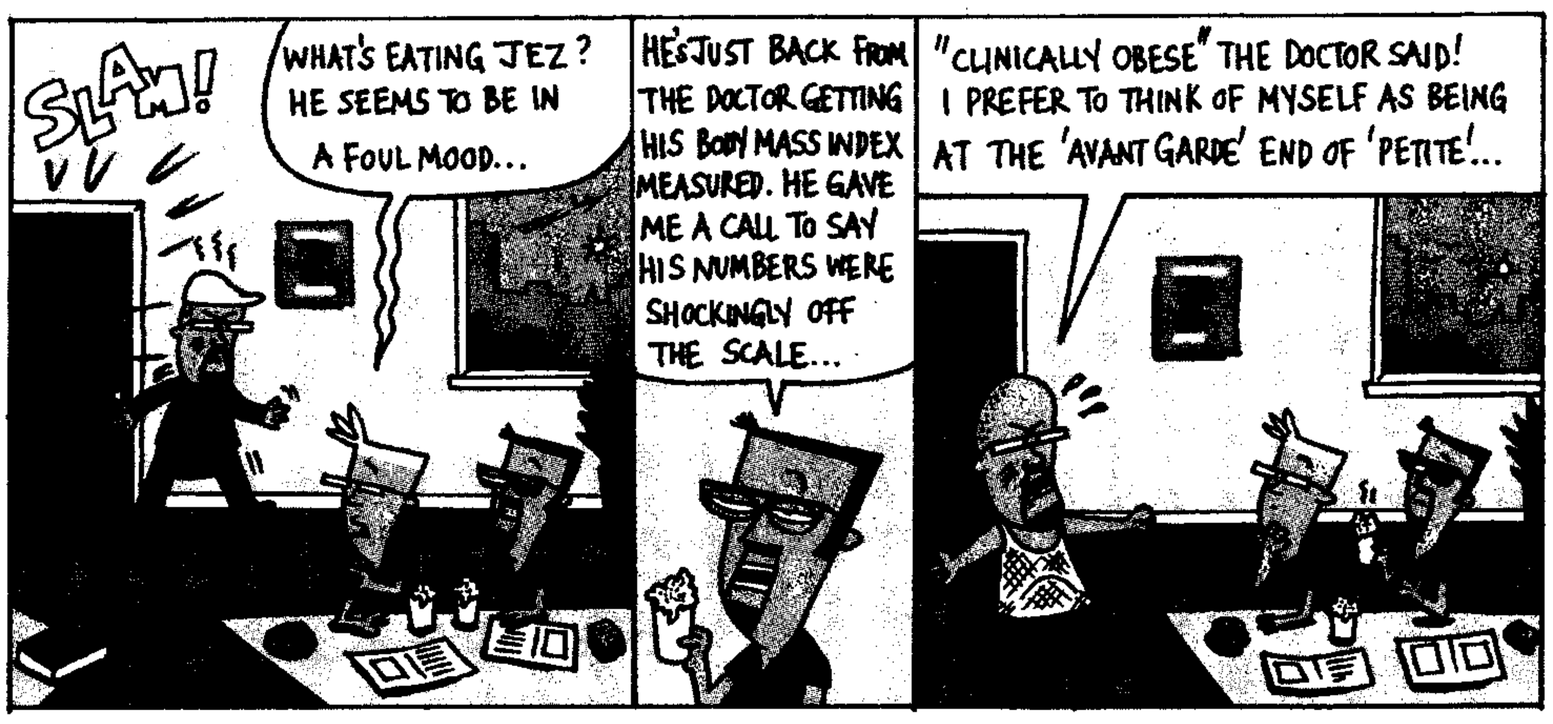
At the first, which cost £9,400, the panel dismissed all the allegations except one – that Buchanan had been "careless" in allowing others to hear him swear under his breath. He duly received a censure – the mildest sanction the panel can deliver. At a second hearing (cost £8,100), the panel ruled that Buchanan had attempted to "intimidate" Jones as a complainant in an ongoing investigation. He was suspended from standing as a councillor for two years – a penalty of limited effectiveness given he had already decided to stand down and concentrate on getting into parliament as Lib Dem candidate for East Devon.

So, after two years of unattractive bickering, and with Jones moving on too, there are no winners but there is one big loser: Somerset taxpayers.

● **FEELING HARD-UP: Lambeth leaseholders, whose service charge bills have risen by up to 100 percent in the last year, and tenants, whose rents have increased by 17 percent since the formation of Lambeth Living Limited (LLL), London's largest "almo", which took control of the council's 34,000 properties in July 2008.**

● **FEELING FLUSH: hordes of housing consultants employed by LLL on up to £700 a day. Cock of the Lambeth Walk is David Gilles, who gets £689 a day, equivalent to an annual salary of £189,475, for ensuring procurement projects represent "value for money". Trebles all round!**

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


SLAM!
WHAT'S EATING JEZ? HE SEEMS TO BE IN A FOUL MOOD...
HE'S JUST BACK FROM THE DOCTOR GETTING HIS BODY MASS INDEX MEASURED. HE GAVE ME A CALL TO SAY HIS NUMBERS WERE SHOCKINGLY OFF THE SCALE...
"CLINICALLY OBESE" THE DOCTOR SAID! I PREFER TO THINK OF MYSELF AS BEING AT THE 'AVANT GARDE' END OF 'PETITE'...

NOOKS and CORNERS

AS the Olympic Games approach and the cost of this gratuitous nightmare for London rises, the mayor, to his credit, has said that: "Too much attention is being paid to the will of international sports federations and not enough to the people of London."

However, while Boris Johnson claims that £20m can be saved by moving shooting from a temporary venue in Woolwich to Barking and rhythmic gymnastics from a temporary venue in Greenwich to Wembley, he does not challenge the desirability of an even greater and more expensive example of bad planning and arrogance: the proposal to site Olympic equestrian events in Greenwich Park.

Lying between Blackheath and Wren's glorious Royal Naval Hospital by the Thames and containing the Royal Observatory, Greenwich Park is a much used amenity affording magnificent views – as painted by Turner – and is part of a World Heritage Site. In this comparatively confined space, never used for equestrian events before, the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) plans to hold a cross country race as well as show jumping and dressage. A 23,000-seat, temporary stadium will go up at the bottom of the main avenue in front of Inigo Jones's celebrated Queen's House. Training areas, stabling (for some 250 horses) and "Event Compounds" will sit on the lawns between the Queen's House and the Royal Naval Hospital (now Greenwich University) and in front of the National Maritime Museum, while the cross-country route will weave between the ancient trees and go through the flower garden with its lake. (LOCOG has failed to indicate where veterinary and hospitality services, etc, will go). To achieve all this, the lower half of the park (closest to Greenwich's historic centre) will close to the public from March or April 2012 for six to eight months and the whole park will shut in July for several weeks during the school holidays when it is busiest.

Greenwich Park, as depicted by Turner (1809)

A principal argument for the 2012 Olympics has always been that there will be a "legacy" for London, but in Greenwich there the only legacy will be damage and debt. LOCOG claims that when this wretched event is over, the temporary stadium and other structures can be removed and all trace of drains, water and power services expunged. But the park, with its historic architectural background, is beautiful and fragile; and for this reason English Heritage initially opposed the plan – until it was brought into line.

The four local amenity societies were also feeble in their opposition so, last year, NOGOE – "No to Greenwich Olympic Equestrian Events" – was founded to protect the park. NOGOE observes that Greenwich was only chosen because it is close to the main Olympic site across the Thames and that there are other sites near London more suitable for equestrian events such as Windsor Great Park as well as well-used venues like Burghley and Badminton. It also points out that "there was *no* public consultation" about bringing the equestrian Olympics to Greenwich, "no economic assessment in comparison with other venues, *no* understanding of the Park's fragility and role in the community, and *no* concern for the urban context in which local people live, work and run small businesses a few yards from the Park".

NOGOE has petitioned the Treasury and politicians that some £30m-£50m might be saved by holding equestrian events elsewhere because of the environmental, social and congestion costs (the National Maritime Museum and nearby businesses will lose revenue while the park is closed). Environmental costs are hard to quantify, but as some of the ground will have to be levelled and services dug into the ground, the cost of clearing up is likely to be high. In a debate in the House of Lords in June, Lord Lucas observed that: "Legacy is one of the foundation stones of the Olympic movement. Why, then, does LOCOG persist in putting the shooting at Woolwich and the horse riding at Greenwich? These two venues will cost in excess of £100m. Both will be utterly destroyed immediately after the Games, leaving no legacy of any description. Alternative venues outside London would cost tens of millions of pounds less and would leave permanent legacies for both sports." LOCOG should think again.

MORE good news (see last Eye)– first from Oxford, where the city council has voted against Oxford Brookes University's controversial plan to overdevelop its Headington Hill campus, overruling the earlier decision of its planning committee (Eye 1238).

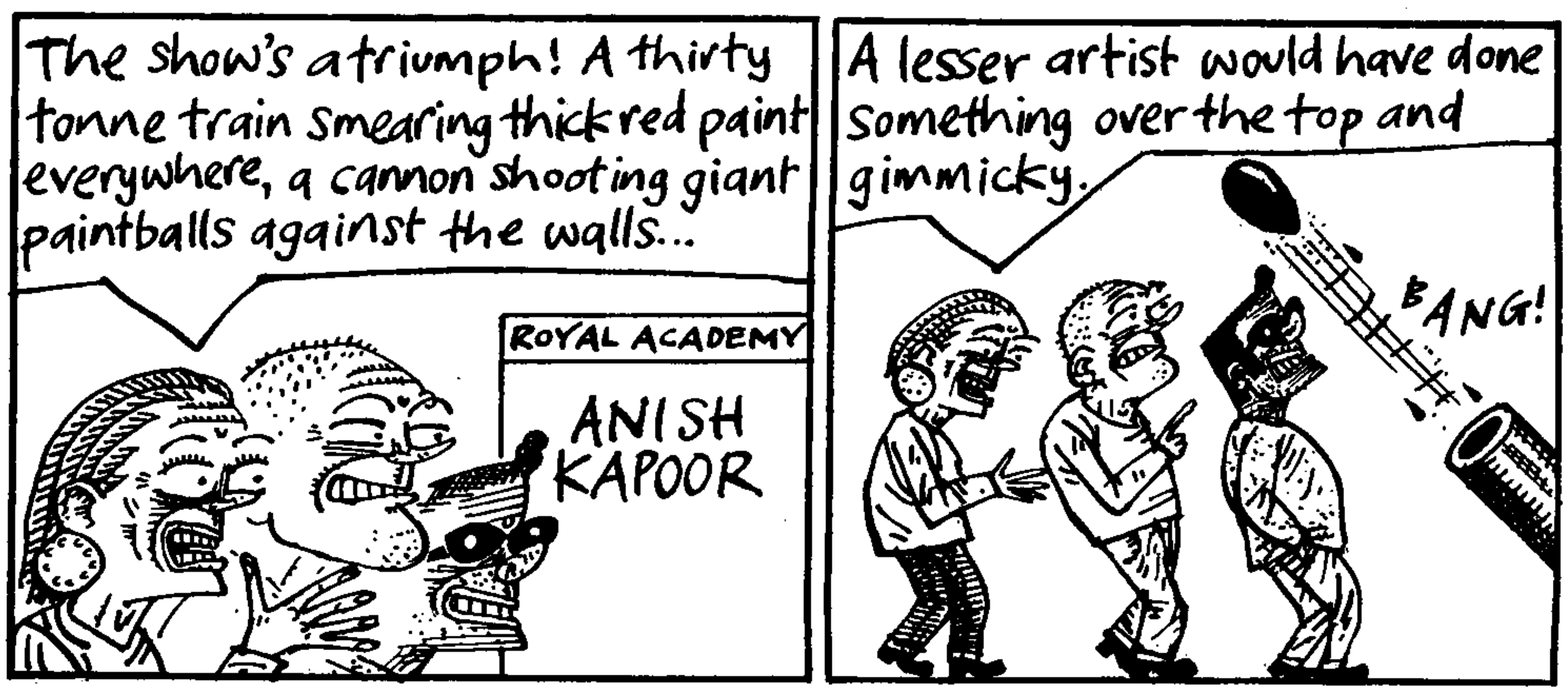
Furthermore, the legal challenge by SAVE Britain's Heritage to Gravesham council's decision to allow the demolition of the former church in Gravesend used as a Sikh gurdwara has been successful (Eye 1244): the council must think again.

This follows the welcome news (see Eye 1242) that Camden council has turned down the planning application by the British Museum for an overweening development of the north-western part of its site by Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners. But, for reasons which remain inscrutable, the Museum is sticking with Milord Rogers' grossly insensitive firm and Graham Stirk now hopes to overcome objections by half burying his wretched new building in the ground and still proposes to replace the important replica Georgian houses in Montague Place with an eruption of steel and glass. I hope Camden council remains resolute.

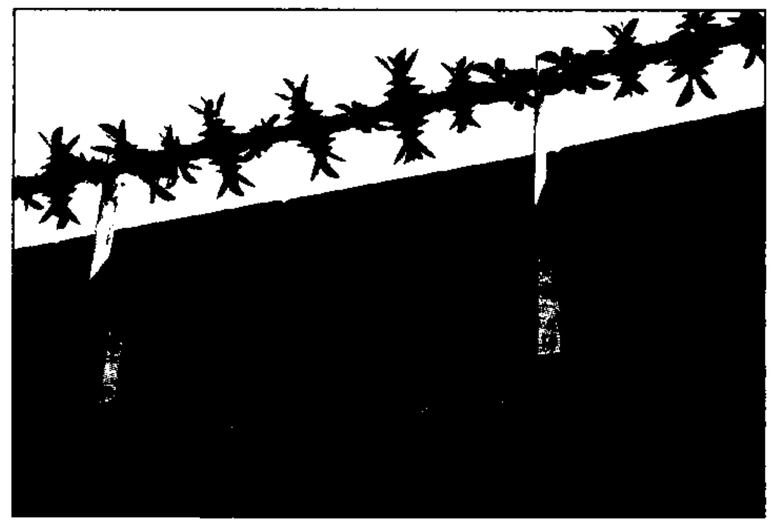
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


The show's a triumph! A thirty tonne train smearing thick red paint everywhere, a cannon shooting giant paintballs against the walls...
ROYAL ACADEMY
ANISH KAPOOR
A lesser artist would have done something over the top and gimmicky.
BANG!

I-SPY *Swimming pool, Petersfield, Hants*



Submitted by Clive Fenner. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

WHAT makes ageing pop stars think they can revive their careers by marching with the arrogance of wealth and fame (but no experience or understanding) into classical music?

Someone should have warned Sting that whatever he may have achieved in the past, he really wasn't up to singing Dowland songs with lute accompaniment. So why, with that failed Dowland CD gathering dust in Oxfam shops, did anyone encourage him to try again – this time with a badly misconceived DVD project about Robert Schumann, launched at the Royal Opera House last week?

The DVD charts in words and music the tragedy of Robert and his wife Clara – one of the great love narratives of the 19th century and hardly unturned ground. Here it has been glossily repackaged as a "revelation" (which may be true for Sting but not the rest of us). But be warned: amid the glossy packaging you'll be hard-pressed to find so much as a picture of the Schumanns. Instead there's Sting (looking Byronic), Sting (looking devoted), Sting (looking determined), Sting (just looking) – which has an ironic truth given that Sting doesn't actually do much more on the DVD than look.

From all the fuss you'd assume he'd be crooning Schumann songs. But this falls to Simon Keenlyside, the noted baritone, which leaves Sting little to do but stare pensively to camera and read out some of the great composer's correspondence – which he does in a portentous darkness, sitting in a sort of throne, and with no great ability.

He doesn't even tell the background story (Derek Jacobi does that); but he does contribute to an "extra-features" disc on which he shares his thoughts on Schumann. Thoughts, alas, that aren't worth sharing.

It's hard to think of a recent release that matches this for vanity, vacuity or sheer pretension. No doubt ROH, which has a financial stake in it, will trot out the standard "Bringing Classical Music to a Wider Audience" defence, but it will do nothing for the company's artistic credibility.

Universal first tried to promote the DVD to classical critics, offering them interviews with Sting. Then, sensing an unfavourable response, the interviews were cancelled at a stroke and the marketing was redirected at pop critics (as if *they'd* be interested in Robert Schumann). Result? A shambles… and a huge flop in the making.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

As you have booked for one of the performances of *L'heure espagnole/Gianni Schicchi*, I am writing to let you know that, due to pregnancy, **Christine Rice** has had to withdraw from the role of Concepcion.

Royal Opera House email

Letters

BNP'd off

Sir,

I was outraged to spot this month's Private Eye magazine cover this morning!

I used to think Private Eye was a little funny! However you have chosen to sink to the depths of Nu-Liebour and associate a democratic political party with nearly a million voters and two MEPs with an evil murderous, racist dictatorship.

Make no mistake, I will bring your filthy rag to the attention of every internet media outlet possible and every news channel. (There is also bound to be at least one non-Marxist/left-wing bigot at the BBC who will be interested in the legal ramifications of your printed material!) Defamation, incitement?

Yours,
ROBERT EVERETT,

Via email.

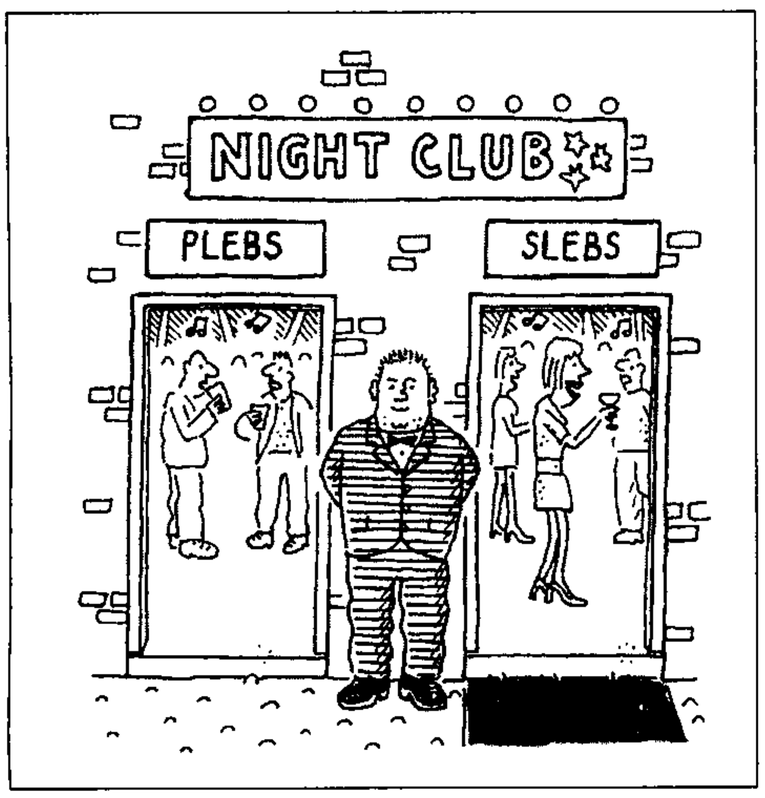
Question time

Sir,

Surely Herr von Dimbleby is wrong in calling on the "gentleman at the back in the brown shirt" (cover Eye 1245); the gentleman on the extreme right in the brown shirt had his hand up first!

Yours,
LINDSAY McKEE,

Via email.



Timing is everything

Sir,

Literary Review (Eye 1245) rightly takes a swipe at Google and the pre-dating of certain titles on its books website. However, prescience is not a Google exclusive, it seems, as this same edition of the Eye, published on 18 September but printed earlier in the week, includes in the Funny Old World column an item from the Leicester Mercury dated 17/9/09, and a piece suggested by myself and dated 19/9/09. With such far-seeing ability the Eye might yet offer a challenge to the talented Mr Derren Brown.

Yours in time,
CHRIS SPURR,

Via email.

● Apologies for the typographical gremlins. Ed.

Durex Extra Safe Condoms 24 pack
Buy new: £3.32
4 Used & new from £1.00
In stock
Amazon

Liar Tuck?

Sir,

Re Street of Shame, Private Eye 1245. I am instructed by Sir David and Sir Frederick Barclay. You carried a piece in Issue 1245 speculating about a publication announced by "a mysterious Sark-based outfit called Global Investors Research". You questioned why no writ had been issued or the site shut down. If you had carried out research of your own, you would have discovered that the individual behind "Global" is one "Lord de Chanson", although Mr de Chanson did not come into this world as a peer of the realm, nor is he a peer now, hereditary or lifer. It appears that he was born plain "Craig Tuck", and if a report in the Guardian of 24th September 2005 (still on the Guardian website) is to be believed, Mr de Chanson has previous convictions for obtaining monies by deception related to earlier attempts to compile and sell information about prominent individuals. A similar report appeared some years before in the Independent for 11th September 1998 (again still available online). It follows that my clients do not give much credence to Global Investors Research.

Yours faithfully,
GORDON DAWES,

Partner, Ozannes, Guernsey.

Lookalike

Burnham

Tracy

Sir,

I recall Andy Burnham piloting Thunderbird 1 in the 1970's and thought he may be related to the MP for Leigh, Scott Tracy?

Yours,
DAN BOWDEN,

Via email.

No flies on him

Sir,

Your Books & Bookmen column complained of the dumbing-down represented by Faber and Faber's subtitle of the Golding biog, "The Man Who Wrote Lord of the Flies". But surely the title is a reference to (and comment on) the fact that this is how most people think of Golding, with the implication that there is more to know?

Yours faithfully,
MARK BAKER,

Woking, Surrey.

Libya latest

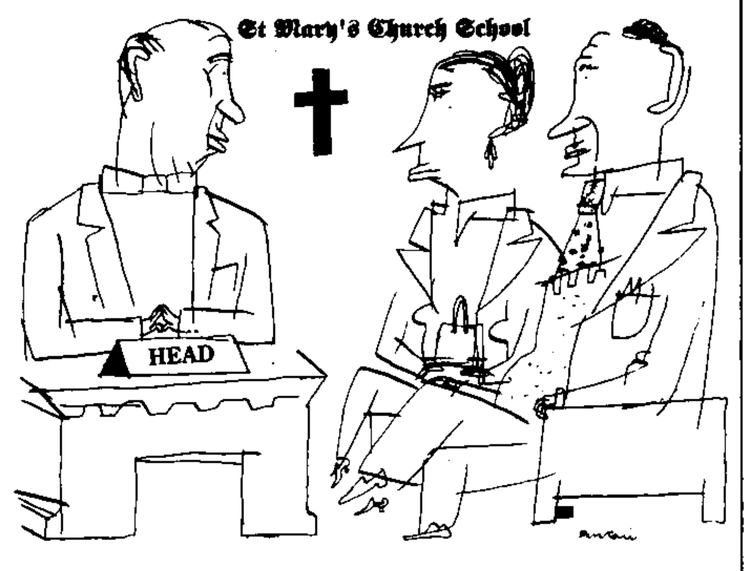
Sir,

Re the story about compensation being claimed for victims of Semtex and other weapons supplied by Libya. Would there be an exposure in the UK to claims by those, or representatives of those, killed or injured by weapons supplied in the past by British firms? Or are weapons sold by Britain only used on the bad guys?

GRAHAM NOBLE,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



"Non-believers? Are you? Well, what does it matter as long as your child gets a good education?""

On your bike

Sir,

Re Motorbike training / L on wheels (In the Back, Eye 1244).

Our stated intention is to create 66 multi-purpose test centres (MPTCs), not the 75 reported.

The programme is still on target to deliver the centres, in budget. Only last month we informed the motorcycle industry about progress on new centres at Ayr, Bournemouth/Poole, Dundee, Gillingham/Maidstone, Leeds, Newbury, Stoke, Stockport, Taunton, Uxbridge and York. Work has started or is about to start in places, some are in the planning process, others are at an advanced stage of talks with landowners. Often, delays have been outside DSA's control.

You state the only test centre covering Birmingham is in Wolverhampton. Actually, the Garrett's Green centre delivers the test for Birmingham, in addition to Wolverhampton. In the London area there are permanent centres at Enfield, Erith and Basildon, plus temporary sites in Croydon and Yeading. Talks about a new permanent centre in west London are advanced.

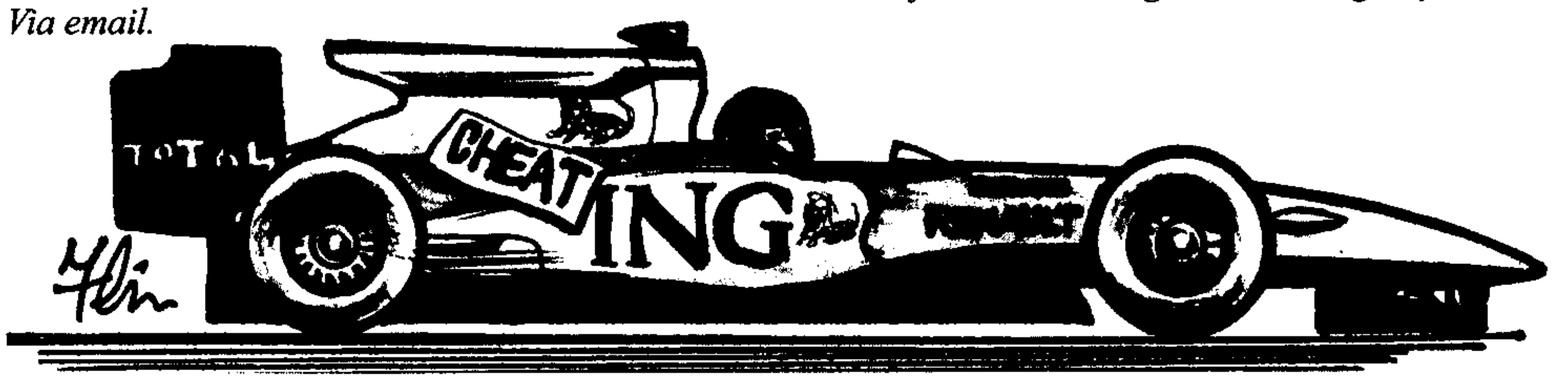
On what basis do you consider the hazard avoidance (or swerve) manoeuvre dangerous? Evidence shows that in the very small number of test incidents, there's as much chance of candidates losing control of their bike on the emergency stop as the avoidance. The test is designed to be more difficult – that doesn't mean it's more dangerous. Properly-prepared candidates who've had enough training and practice should have no trouble passing – and many senior motorcycle industry and training figures agree.

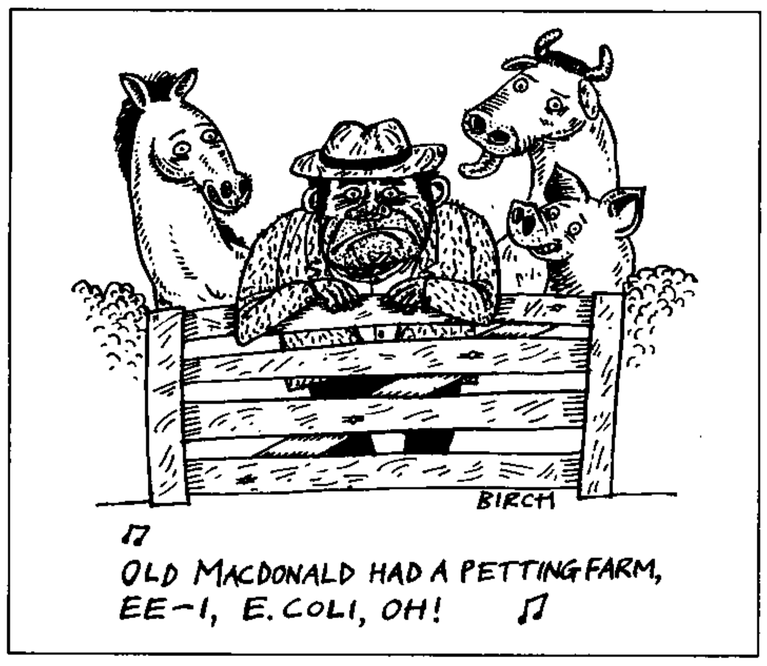
Test demand is lower at present, probably partly because it was up by 27 per cent in the year preceding the new test, as training companies and candidates rushed to book the old version. We expect demand to settle at usual levels again in 2010/11.

Finally, to suggest that there is a "problem which doesn't exist" is complacent. Motorcyclists make up one per cent of traffic, but almost one in five fatalities (although numbers are dropping, 493 died in 2008). The new test, along with DSA's portfolio of work, is designed to increase safety by making sure riders are better prepared for the hazards they will encounter.

Best wishes,
JOHN ATKIN,

Head of Media, Driving Standards Agency.





Beatle maniacs

Sir,

Your correspondent Hugh Schollick ("Bitter Lennon", Letters, Eye 1245) makes the curmudgeonly mistake of belittling Beatles tunes as just "tuneful ditties". It is not "pretentious nonsense" to say they compare favourably with the likes of Mozart and Mahler. Critics from the Times's William Mann, who in 1963 amously cited the "Aeolian cadences" of "Not A Second Time", to Ian McDonald in his excellent book Revolution In The Head, to Howard Goodall in his 20th Century Greats Channel 4 series, have provided ample of evidence of the brilliance of the Beatles' songwriting abilities.

All this and they were incredibly popular – is that what Mr Schollick resents?

R. LEWIN,

Via email.

Sir,

If your correspondent Hugh Schollick is truly seeking irony within Lennon's lyrics, he should consider the tuneful ditty "Happiness is a Warm Gun".

Yours,
PAUL STANDRING,

Bolton.

Pseudo Names: In memoriam

... It looks as though you have finally removed the superb Pseudo Names feature. I am sure I speak for thousands when I say this will leave a huge gap in our lives.

MISS U. LOTTS.

... OK, you have had a ball. Surely it's time to put your feet up.

SIR RIK LEE COME-DANCING.

... I thought that Pseudo Names had had its chips but it was given another throw of the dice. What will happen when the wheel of fortune stops? I've a feeling all bets are off.

RHIANNA VAPLEW.

... I am delighted to see that Pseudo Names has risen from the ashes.

FI NICKS.

... I write to say
Some Pseudo Names have made my day.
Some are crap. With love and kisses

SUMMER HITSON-SOMER (MRS).

... I note that many of your contributors to Pseudo Names seem preoccupied with its demise. I find this somewhat morbid.

ROGER DE'ATH.

... It's about time Pseudo Names was allowed to die gracefully and go to a better place.

ENOCH NOKKNOKKINON
EVAN STORE.

... Have you finally managed to kill off the Pseudo Names section?

FAY THINKITTS
SAUL LOAFER
E. TISNOW.

Pedantry Corner

*... Re Literary Review and Pedantry Corner (Eye 1245). Ena B. Cockerell has got it wrong. The distinction between **writing paper** and **notepaper** is that of u and non-u. This system is meant to differentiate between the gentry and the rest of us. Servants would be expected to use non-u language. So the footman might well have been dismissed for calling it **writing paper** on the basis that he obviously had ideas above his station.*

HUW JAMES.

... Whatever the Romans did or didn't do for us or anybody else, losing the Ark is one thing which they can't be blamed for (Pedantry Corner, Eye 1245). The Babylonians are the most likely candidates for that during the destruction of the first Temple, but at any rate even in the more outlandish theories of its fate it is regarded as having vanished well before the Romans came to Jerusalem. The Revd Canon Geoffrey Ravalde may well be confused with the Menorah, stolen by Titus in 70 AD in the destruction of the second Temple and taken to Rome, where it apparently remained until 455 when the Vandals nicked it in turn. Procopius reports that Belisarius recovered it in the 6th century and took it to Constantinople, it perhaps even subsequently returning to Jerusalem, after which there is no further mention.

CLIVE DIXON.

*... Re: Evangelic Revelation (Eye 1245), Mr Costain makes a false distinction (Paganism vs devil worship). I refer him to the Psalmodist, in the Vulgate: "omnes dii gentium daemonia' (**all** the gods of the heathens are demons, 95.5). Readers requiring further confirmation of this should peruse the Life of St Martin, where Martin's noble campaign against devil-worship is frequently interrupted by the malicious actions of trees.*

PETER CHETWYND.

... Johnsonian buffoonery, the Boris kind, has led your writer (Eye 1245, p. 20) into a grave error. There were no illiterate hansom cab drivers in classically educated Johnsonian London. Architect Hansom introduced his cab in 1834.

K. HARE.

... Re the advertisement for The Turds' computer game from Fuwataschorca Karaoke, surely the performance artist and muse of Spiggy Topes was not Ono Yoki but the much more accommodating Okay Yoni.

ELEANOR PEPPER (age 64).

Stolen pleasures

Sir,

Someone has been stealing copies of Private Eye, or so my local library tells me. I now have to sign a form to read your paper.

I have two questions. (1) Are you attracting the wrong kind of reader? Or (2) Is this a government conspiracy to keep Private Eye away from the public eye?

I am so paranoid I may have to resort to actually buying my own copy.

As an impoverished pensioner, I am outraged.

Yours sincerely,
HOWARD ROBINSON,

Barry, Vale of Glamorgan.

Yvette Cooper-Balls

Sir,

Re Labour in Brighton (HP Sauce, Eye 1245). Seems you are slipping a bit behind the times. In the above article you quote Yvette Cooper as Treasury Minister when in fact she replaced James Purnell at the DWP!

TONY OAKLAND-SMITH,

Via email.

● Apologies. Cooper was appointed secretary of state for work and pensions in June.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Celtic's Garry Caldwell is enjoying a miserable few weeks at the start of the season."
IAN CROCKER, ITV
(John McCready)

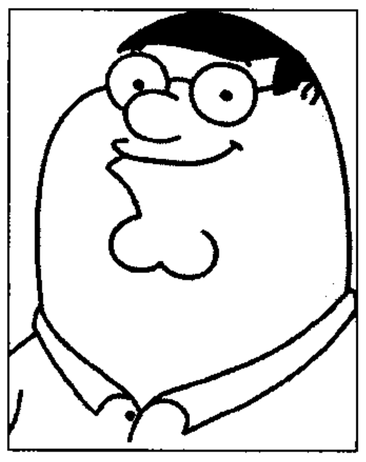
"Women's football does have its knockers."
ADRIAN DURHAM, TalkSport
(Mark Lambe)

"This new ball... literally explodes off the player's foot."
JAMIE REDKNAPP, Sky Sports
(Bob Low)

"I took great solstice from England's Ashes win."
MARTIN ADAMS (darts player), BBC
(Chris Gill)

"We have to remember that horses are only human..."
MIKE TUCKER, BBC2
(Sue Sutcliffe)

Lookalike


Moore

Griffin

Sir,

Could Americans be confusing their favourite "giant socialist weasel" for Family Guys Peter Griffin?

Regards,
ANDREW KEEN,

Buxton.

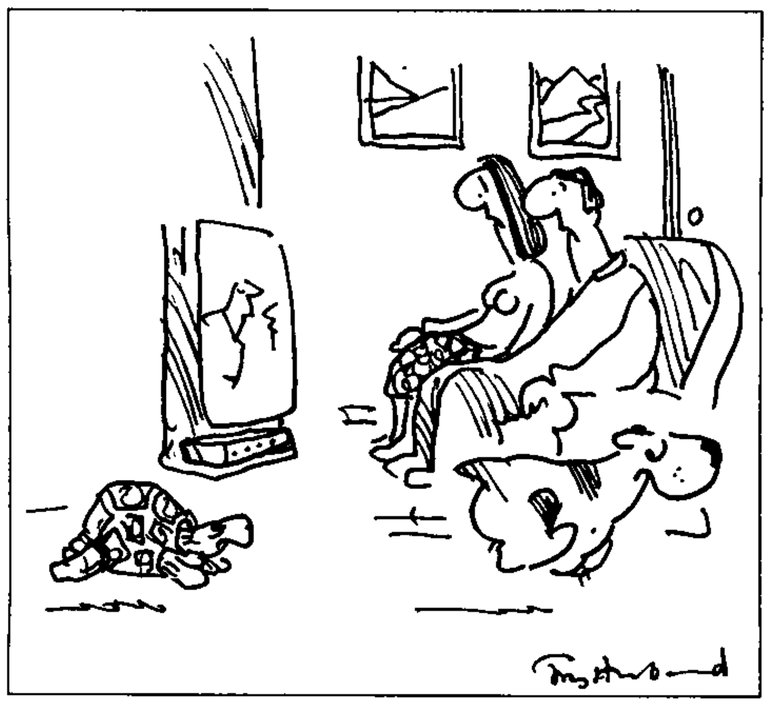
Shape up or ship out

Sir,

Re Prison News, Eye 1244. Similar tactics of "shipping out" were employed to hide tricky inmates-in-waiting from Ofsted inspectors at a Barnsley comprehensive I used to work at. No doubt that this, too, is fairly standard procedure for any "difficult" inner-city school fearing the worst come inspection time. Snap inspections would help eliminate all such attempts to cheat.

Yours,
STEVE DIBBLE,

Via email.



FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

●"A child never forgets a drunk or vomiting clown at their birthday party," Pepe de Pipo told a press conference in Brussels, "so we have to stamp out such unprofessional behaviour. 80% of people who call themselves clowns simply do not meet the quality criteria. They are just charlatans who started their careers while half-cut at some family gathering, and then thought they could make some money by clowning professionally. That's why we have formed this association. It is time to rid Belgium of fake clowns."

Pepe de Pipo went on to outline the criteria for membership of the newly-formed Belgian Magical Entertaining Clowns Association. "Clowns wishing to be considered for the quality label will be required to uphold a number of basic rules. They should not smoke in the presence of children, should not drink alcohol, or swear, or hurt anyone with their jokes. Ideally, they should also be funny, although that is less important. A jury has already been selected to decide whether or not a clown comes up to scratch, and if they pass the audition, they will not only be allowed to join the association, but will also be issued with a quality clown label." *(Het Laatste Nieuws, 6/8/09. Spotter: Andrew Grantham)*

– ● –

● *"Unregulated sperm donation is creating a heightened risk of incest in big country towns like Adelaide," Dr Andrew Dutney told members of the Council on Reproductive Technology at Flinders University, "especially amongst the children of lesbians. In one recent reported case, thirty lesbians from Adelaide were impregnated with sperm from one man, and in another, the same man's sperm was used by lesbians to produce twenty-nine children. In most of these cases, lesbians have casual sex with a sympathetic male, or persuade him to donate sperm, then use it to impregnate themselves with turkey basters.*

"That might not seem like a problem, but lesbian groups tend to organise picnics and barbecues together, and they bring their children along. The children then socialise with their half-siblings, without they or their mothers realising that they are related. And as they get older, there's a real risk that they could accidentally commit incest.

"The problem is that fertility treatment clinics do not generally cater to homosexuals, because the law says such treatment is only for infertile couples, or those at risk of transmitting a serious defect. So lesbians are forced to 'go it alone', and have children outside the normal system. Unless we want a widespread outbreak of incest amongst the next generation, the regulations will have to change." (Weekend Courier [Australia], 11/7/09. Spotter: James Biscoe)

– ● –

● "We don't find our name particularly funny," Mayor Franz Meindl told reporters in the Austrian village of Fucking, "and we're not amused that other people do. We just want to be left alone, but every day we have so many tourists taking photographs of each other while acting out the word beneath our village nameplate that we've had to install CCTV cameras to dissuade them. Why do they do it? We don't harm anyone, we just want to live in peace."

But just over the German border, in the Bavarian town of Wank, their neighbours were unsympathetic. "The people in Fucking should cash in on their fame," said Juergen Stoll, who

runs the Wank guest house. "I have so many visitors staying here that we have to line the mattresses up in one big room, otherwise we couldn't fit everybody in. If the name helps to bring in the tourists, then why not cash in on it? In these credit crunch times, every little helps. In summer, visitors come to Wank so they can photograph each other on Wank Mountain, or go skiing on Wank piste. We sell hundreds of Wank postcards each month, especially the ones with the 'Welcome to Wank' sign on them. The name means nothing to most Germans, but when it comes to attracting English-speaking visitors, it's a goldmine." *(Central European News, 5/8/09. Spotter: Colin Robertson)*

"Dad,Dad... I'm homophobic"

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Met recruits minorities to guard royals

I see they are looking for "ethnic minorities" who must be "currently or previously firearms trained" – two areas in which our Zanulabour paradise is truly "world class". – ***Brown_out***

The advertisement "particularly welcomes" applicants of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persuasion. The Army and Navy have long harboured their share of exotic creatures (as has the Court itself) and most sex changes involve ex-servicemen. The Met could do worse than employ a few of these ladies and former gentlemen. – ***Robert_"R"***

they will have to provide a name and a dress! – ***Danny_Daz***

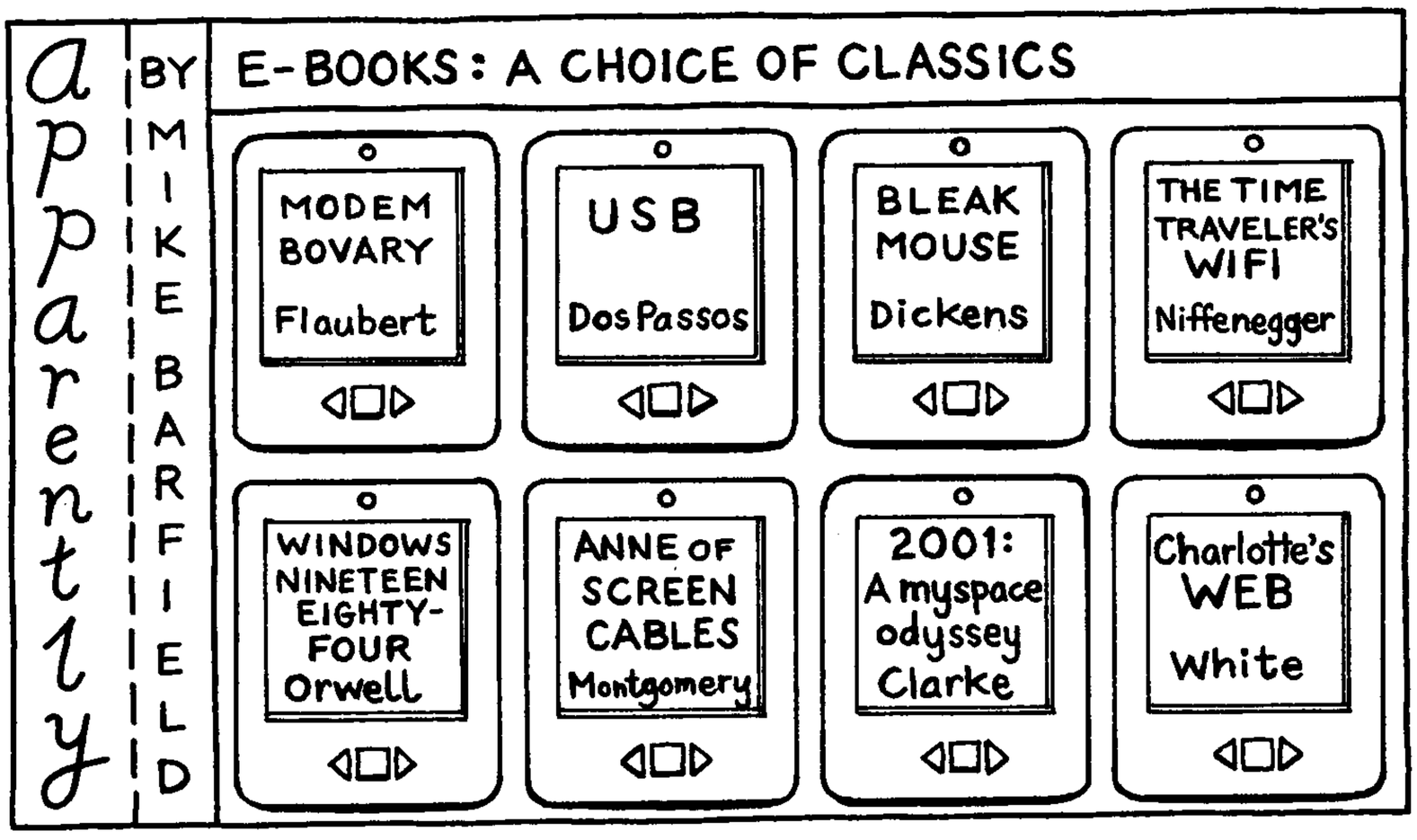
now they wil change the song 2 god save are GAY-sious queen lol! – ***Darling_Deneyze***

I smell the hand of Ms Harryette Harmans hand in this ☺ new labour = new labia lol! – ***Prima_Donut***

On top of his official appointments, the Duke of York also works informally on behalf of British business, often at golfing events. It's hard to see these gays and half-way houses fitting into this environment, where people are accustomed to sitting on a chair without worrying about who (or what) may have sat there before them. – ***Gerald***

with all due respect to myself i read book's on the subject of security and special force's and these guy's are the crem dela le crem of the worlds elite force's ☹ i was talk-ing to SAS HERO CHRIS RYAN after he done a book signe-ing in northamton and he agre-ed with me about pretect-ing the royal's ☹ it was to late to drive back to bournemouth so i kipped in the van and he give me some tip's on survival-ing the cold night sorry i cant reveal them SAS SECRET'S ☹ i dint buy the book this time becus i spent the money on petrol but fair play to chris he signed my mcdonalds bag ☺ CHRIS YOUR A LEGEND – ***Bravo_2_Zero***

if a transgender police need's to go toilet but theres no transgender toilet can it use the royal toilet? – ***Hayley_321***



PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 54

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader in Room 101 of the Brighton Holiday Inn

I welcome all delegates to this week's 194th Party Congress in the People's Hall (formerly the Torville and Dean Ice Ballroom).

Comrades, this is a momentous week where we must all devote ourselves to Operation Fightback, the coming struggle against the forces of reaction. We must be united and particularly on our guard against our enemies within who would seek to overthrow the Supreme Leader and replace him with a stooge, a puppet of the Blairite Tendency, who would take orders directly from the hated former leader, ex-Comrade Blair. I refuse to dignify these traitorous apparatchiks by naming them, however much this may disappoint the likes of Comrade Harperson, Comrade Darling, Comrade Miliband, other Comrade Miliband, Comrade Balls and Comrade Johnson. If there is any backstabbing renegade comrade that I have overlooked, I apologise.

So, may I make it clear to this Congress that the only reason I have not been focussing entirely on the domestic agenda recently is because I have been briefly absent in the People's United States of America, to spell out to the world's assembled leaders my plans for saving:

1) the world economy.

2) the world itself from global warming.

I have to say that both my speeches on these crucially important matters were listened to by my fellow leaders in respectful silence. This was, I am sorry to say, in marked contrasat to the reception given to the 9-hour speech made by my very good friend Comrade President Colonel Gadaffi. It was regrettable that many delegates took offence when he humorously described them as "murdering terrorists, worse than Al Qaeda" and staged a walk-out when he tore up a copy of the Tripoli telephone directory to demonstrate that he was "the strongest man in Africa".

I was kept so busy by these very important engagements that, sadly, I could not find time to see Comrade President Obama, despite his five desperate phone calls pleading with me to spare him just a few minutes of my valuable time.

Eventually, feeling sorry for him, due to his increasing unpopularity at home, I agreed to bolster his image by allowing him to meet me briefly in the gents' toilet in the basement of the United Nations building.

We engaged in a comprehensive review of several vital issues, such as the lack of soap in the dispenser and the inability of the hand-dryer to deliver on its promise to guarantee "dry hands in less than 10 seconds".

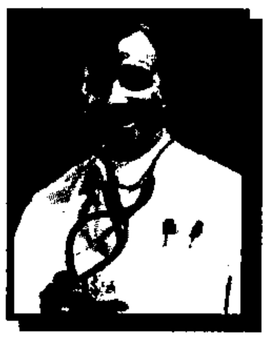
Let me stress to all Comrades that though I value our relationship with our transatlantic comrades, America is no longer the power that it was in the world, and it is now much more important that we should forge new special relationships with the world's emerging super powers, such as Libya.

Having achieved all my desired outcomes on my historic visit to America, I have now returned to Middle Britain to focus my attention on such urgent domestic issues as Comrade Baroness Scotland's cleaner and winning the forthcoming election with my new plan, Operation Fighter-Not-A-Quitter-Back.

Yours globally,

Gordon Brown

Supreme (World) Leader and Chairman of the Gadaffi Appreciation Society (GAS)



Another Certificate of the Complete Mental and Physical Health of the Supreme Leader

Issued by Comrade Dr Lord Mandelson

Let me reassure all Comrades once again that there is no need whatsoever for any concern as to the Supreme Leader's physical and mental well-being.

In particular, let me categorically deny that the Supreme Leader has been prescribed any anti-depressants (particularly **not** Bonkazapam). He is far from depressed and, on the contrary, is full of joy at the strength and depth of the Party's support for his leadership.

Furthermore, having personally witnessed the Supreme Leader engaging in a rigorous two-hour workout, including 120 press-ups, a 45-mile session on the running machine and a swim up and down the Thames, I can certify that the Supreme Leader will be fully qualified not only to run the country but also to run the Marathon in the 2012 Olympics.

Anyone foolish and irresponsible enough to suggest that I have in any sense fabricated the above details should be aware that I know where they live.

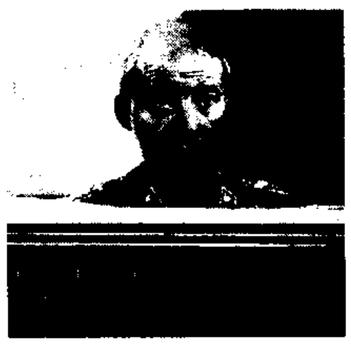
Signed

Comrade Lord Doctor Mandelson of Harley Street in the County of Herefordshire

"A Fighter Not A Twitter"

Seaside Postcard from The Supreme Leader In Brighton

Enemy of the People No. 94



Ex-Comrade Charles Clarke

It is my regrettable duty to report the flagrant disloyalty of the disgraced former Commissar for Home Affairs ex-Comrade Clarke who has seen fit to launch yet another unprovoked personal attack on myself, clearly motivated solely by spite and rage at the fact that he has long since been expelled from the centres of power.

I shall not waste words on this degenerate viper, nor shall I descend to his level of petty and infantile abuse by calling him an elephant-eared, unshaven, obese lackey of the power-hungry Cameronite Bullingdonian claque. Nor shall I divert attention from the many vital duties which lie before us, by pointing out ex-Comrade Clarke singly failed the British people in every one of the offices with which he was entrusted by the credulous and discredited former leader ex-Comrade Blair, who was deceived by Comrade Clarke's nauseating and sycophantic servility.

Ex-Comrade Clarke had the effrontery to claim that he could name five other Comrades, each of whom was better fitted than myself to act as Supreme Leader, though when pressed to do so by Comrade Paxman he, in typically cowardly fashion, was unwilling to name a single one of them.

Let me, therefore, on behalf of this mangy, moth-eaten relic of Blairite revisionism, suggest who Clarke had in mind: 1. Clarke, 2. Clarke, 3. Clarke, 4. Clarke, 5. Clarke.

There you have it. The entire bankrupt manifesto of a deluded psychopath. G.B.

An Official Clarification

When the Supreme Leader was quoted as saying on a number of occasions that it was vital for the future of the national economy that "we should continue to increase public spending at all costs," he was being quoted out of context.

What he in fact meant was that it was vital for the future of the national economy that "we should cut public spending".

The deliberate confusion between the two words "increase" and "cut" can be laid at the door of the jackals of the Murdochite-Rothermerist press who will stop at nothing in their ceaseless efforts to discredit everything the Supreme Leader says, or rather doesn't say.

COMRADE ED BALLS

Commissar for Toddler Learning Groups, Lollipop Ladies and Lifelong Skills (also Supreme Leader-in-Waiting)

POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

0815 hrs The Station Armed Response Unit answered an urgent distress call from a guest at the St Christopher bed and breakfast establishment in Somerfield Road. The lady in question, Mrs Doreen Burqa, a devout Moslem, claimed that she had been racially and religiously abused by the guest house proprietor, Mr Timothy Wetherspoon, who had offered a "full English", including a rasher of bacon and a pork sausage, in breach of the Public Order (Racial and Religious Harassment) Regulations 2007.

On arrival, the team led by Det Sgt Farringdon arrested Mr Wetherspoon, who was unfortunately injured while being assisted into the back of a police car. He was charged with 17 offences (see above), which he did not deny owing to the fact that he was unconscious.

The accused unfortunately died before admitting his guilt, and his wife's request that her husband should be given a Christian burial was refused on the grounds that it would be a provocative and inflammatory act which would give further offence to Mrs Burqa and the entire Moslem community.

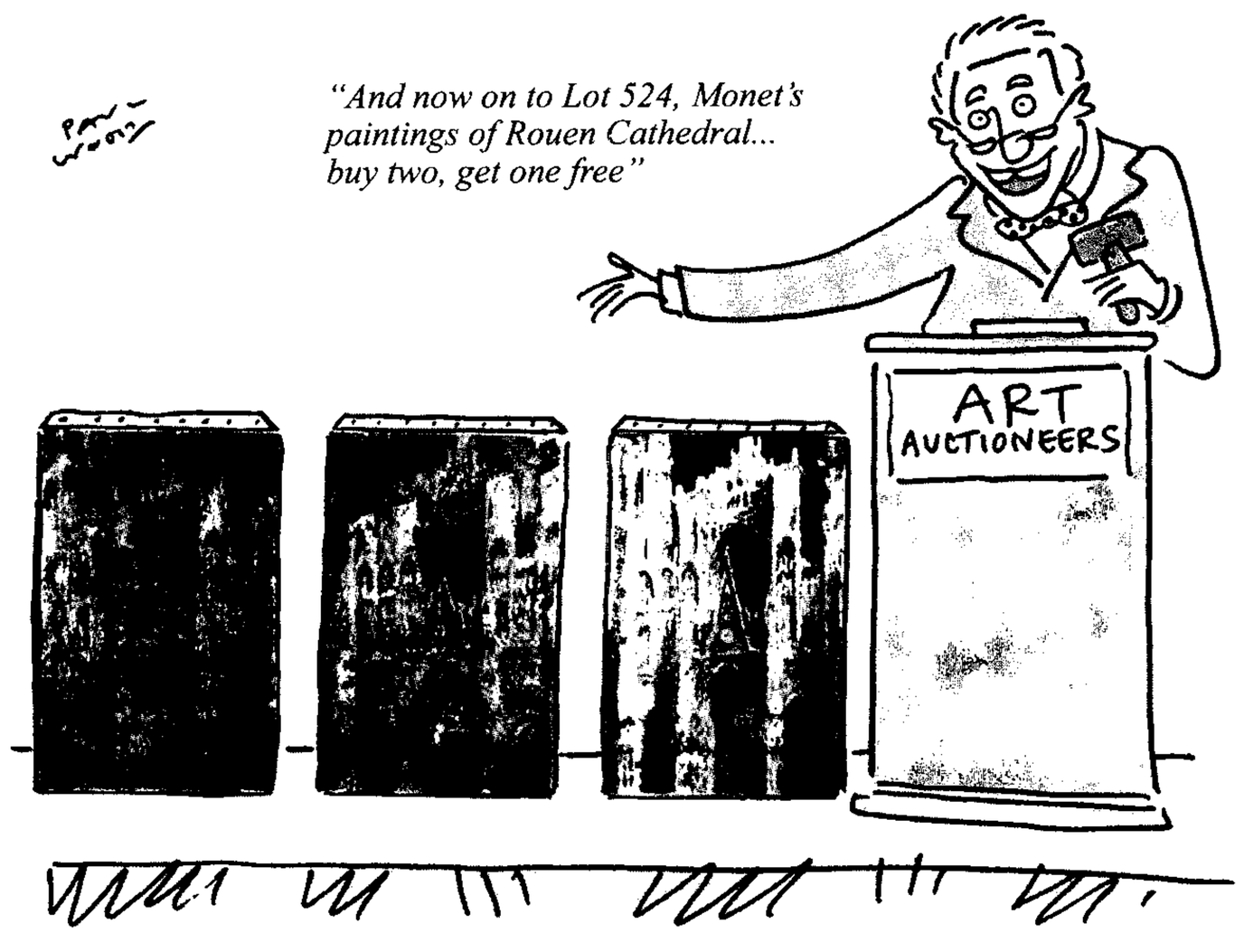
Mrs Burqa was awarded £315,000 ex-gratia compensation for the insult which had been offered to her religion, and the widow Mrs Wetherspoon was ordered to sell the guest house to raise the money required.

A Mrs Wetherspoon, of no fixed abode, was later found wandering along Morrison Road and arrested for vagrancy.

1232 hrs WPC Turnham-Green, acting as desk officer, turned on the station answerphone to check on any messages received since the beginning of the month. There were only 158 of these, all of which were from a female member of the public who was claiming that she and her family were being "terrorised" by a gang of youths wielding knives and throwing bricks through her window. Fortunately her final message indicated the intention of the complainant to kill herself and her family, thus obviating any need for further investigation. The case is therefore now closed.

1428 hrs All officers were summoned to sign a suitable card of congratulation, purchased from Mr Patel's Carderama in Lidl Road, to be sent to our colleagues in the Chelsea Firearms Division, following the official decision that no further action should be taken against them concerning their successful resolution of the Markham Street siege. The card showed a sportsman shooting a grouse, to which PC Hainault had added the witty handwritten comment "Gotcha!"

Due to the current industrial dispute affecting the postal industry, it was decided that the card should be delivered by hand. PC Perivale was therefore instructed to carry out a person-to-person delivery using squad car N94. In the course of executing this duty, PC Perivale again broke the station record (148 mph) whilst travelling down Willesden High Street, despite being impeded by a number of pedestrians, several of whom sadly underwent a terminal accident experience.



Advertisement

New In This Week: ● Homemade pasta-it ● Organic has-beans ● Sour grapes ● Olive oily ● Stale Brown bread ● Rotten apples
PLUS Gordonzova cheese
PRET-A-MANDY
Notting Hill – Brighton – Old Compton Street
"I'm a Focaccia, not a pitta"

Wedding of the Century

Ken & Em
How They Are Related

Ken Livingstone

Erik The Red
|
Ethelred The Ken
|
Salamander The Magnificent
|
Sir Isaac Newt
|
Dr Livingstone
|
Princess Michael Of Ken
|
Red Adair
|
Fred Astaire
|
High Street Ken
|
Kenneth Branagh

Emma Beal

Lady Emma Hamilton
|
Lady Emma Soames
|
Sir Robert Beal
|
John Peel
|
D'Ye-Red-Ken-John-Peel?
|
Princess Bea-I
|
Ian Beale (off *EastEnders*)
|
Eminem
|
M&S
|
Emma Thompson

That Humanist Service In The Reptile House In Full

Zookeeper: Do you, Ken, take this Emma to be your partner in a very real sense in the sight of all these newts.

Ken: The whole point about Boris is that he never says "yes" to anything, he's even had to cancel his scrapping of the congestion charge which I warned would happen, when I was Mayor and...

Zookeeper: May I just interrupt you there and ask you again if you take this woman to be...

Ken *(interrupting)*: I'm glad you asked that question, Londoners made a serious mistake in voting for Boris Johnson and whilst we are on the subject of promises, Boris' promise to bring back the Routemaster failed to materialise like all his other promises.

Newts: *Zzzzzzzzz*

(Service continues for several hours)

Glenda Slagg

The Brighton Belle!?!! (Geddit?!!?)

■HANDS OFF dishy film-maker Roman Polanski!??!! He's the sexy septuagenerian sex offender, stoopid!?!! OK, so he raped a 13-year-old!!?! But it was all a long time ago – and who cares??!? And just think of all those fab films he's given us in the meantime *[Note to sub: fill in names of fabulous films]*. Have those Swiss cops gone cuckoo or what?!!? Why arrest the poor old soul now?? Roman's suffered enough and served his debt to society by living in exile and making such films as *[Note to sub: fill in names of more fabulous films]*.

■ HATS OFF to the Swiss police!!?! At last they've caught Polanski the Paedo as he lurked and smirked in his alpine eyrie!!?! For too long the Dirty Director has evaded justice, living a life of luxury in the land of cuckoo clocks and Toblerone!?!! Now at last he will be forced to pay his debt to society and rot in a Swiss jail, kept awake by cuckoo clocks and living only on Toblerone!!?! *(You've done this bit. Ed.)* And being a Kiddie Kriminal is not Polanski's only krime!?! (Geddit?) What about all his rotten old films?!? Like *[Note to sub: fill in name]* or *[Fill in another name]* or *[Fill in again]*!!?!!

■STRICTLY Come Off it Mr Auntie Beeb!?!! What's Alesha Dixon doing a-judgin' and a-fudgin' on the panel instead of our Arlene!?!! Gor blimey – she's hopeless!?! She doesn't know her cha-chas from her elbow!?? Geddit?! Here's Glenda's marks, darling! Zero! Nil! Nought! and Zilch!!? Geddit?!? Now Foxtrot off, sweetheart!?!

■ LEAVE her alone, Mr Pressman!?!! Allurin' Alesha, I'm talkin' about!?!! Just 'cause she's young 'n' sexy, it seems the whole country's got it in for her!!?! OK, so she isn't a professional hoofer!!?! Hoo-fer-gawd's-sake cares!!?! (Geddit?!?) Honestly – you'd think she'd started World War Three and caused the credit crunch!!? Well, here's Glenda's score!?!! Ten! Ten! Ten! Eleven!!? So just fandango off Mr Media and Alesha alone!?!! (Geddit?!?) We love her – waltz and all!??!? *(You're fired. Ed.)*

■ HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Fit Fall Fellas!?!

● **Lembit Opik.** OK, so your uncle was a Nazi!?! You're still my Mr Extreme Right!??!

● **Richard Mawhinney**. OK, you're married to Baroness Scotland – when she's in jail I'll come and *do* for you!?!! Geddit?!!

● **Ben-Hur.** OK, so you're 2000 years old but I bet you can still give a girl a good ride?!? Even if it is only two minutes!?!! (Geddit?)

Byeee!!

Nursery Times

TOAD BIOGRAPHY SHOCK

by **Kenneth Grahame-Green**

LOVABLE rogue or despicable Fascist? That's the question raised by the publication of a new biography of Mr Alan Toad of Toad Hall.

With his love of fast cars, fast women and leaders of the Nazi Party, Toad was a larger-than-life character who divided opinion wherever he went.

Scoop! Scoop!

One weasel told *Nursery Times*, "The book is quite right. Toad was a Fascist, an aristocratic snob, who despised weasels and wanted us to be wiped out."

Yet a close friend, Sir Adrian Moley, defended him, saying, "I don't recognise this picture of Toad. He was generous, warm-hearted and kind. On his deathbed he converted to Catholicism and is now a saint."

ON OTHER PAGES ● Cow says "I saw water on Moon" **2** ● Waitrose to buy Royal Organic Tart business **3** ● Gingerbread House price to rise **4**

Lives of the Saints and Martyrs No. 94

St Vincent of Cable

AND THERE lived in those times a good and holy man named Vincent, who was much loved by the people for his wisdom and gifts of prophecy.

Like Noah of old, Vincent alone in the kingdom warned the people of the great storm that was about to come upon them, when all the banks would fail and everyone in the land would be drowned in a sea of debt.

And it came to pass, even as Vincent had foretold. And his reputation waxed so great that he became known as "Saint Vincent", and his followers begged him to take one of the most powerful positions in the country (leadership of the Liberal Democrat Party).

But so unworldly was Vincent that he turned them down, saying, "I am old and full of years, and I would not look good on television, unless of course you can get me on Strictly Come Dancing."

Alas, however, St Vincent's blessed good fortune did not last. One day in Bournemouth, as he was preaching to his devoted flock, he told them, "Cursed are the rich who live in large houses. For they should be made to pay taxes, even on every penny over £1 million".

And hearing these words, his followers all turned on him, saying, "Vincent is not a saint after all". And from that time forth their eyes were opened and they cast him out.

'I SHOULDN'T HAVE GIVEN HER A JOB,' Admits Brown

by Our Political Staff
Selina Scotland

THE PRIME MINISTER, Gordon Brown, today came clean and admitted he had hired a woman of Commonwealth origin to act as his Attorney General without "making any checks whatsoever" on her bona fides.

"I was wrong," he said, "but it was an easy mistake to make. I am a busy man and she looked exactly the sort of woman who would clean things up for me and make sure everything was tidy from a legal point of view."

Look Back In Tonga

The woman was named as Patricia Scotland, who claimed to have all the qualifications necessary to be Attorney General.

"The Baroness", as she liked to be called, had very good references from a Mr Blunkett for whom she had done "excellent work".

However, Mr Brown now confessed that he had made "a technical error" in employing someone who made him look like an idiot.

But he said that employing the Baroness "was no worse than not paying the Congestion Charge or invading Iraq" *(cont. p. 94)*

THE SPECTATOR | debate

Independence for Scotland?

Motion: This House believes that Lady Scotland should be given independence from her job now.

Against the Motion: G.Brown, Baroness Scotland.

For the Motion: Everyone else.

Tickets £150, including dinner, glass of wine and a chance to meet The Spectator's new editor *(fill in name)*.

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS

YOUNG CLEGGY SAYS HE WON'T JOIN UP WITH OUR GANG!
WELL WE WOULDN'T WANT HIM ANYWAY!
SIR GEORGE WAS YOUNG
NO TO COALITION
. . . BECAUSE THE BOUNDER'S GOING TO TAX ALL OUR BIG MANSIONS?
NO, BECAUSE HE WENT TO WESTMINSTER!
URGH!!! WHAT A MOST FEARFUL OIK!!!
AND HE WASN'T IN THE BULLINGDON!
TALK ABOUT CHAVS AND CHAV-NOTS!
CLEGG'S GOING TO BE 'ETON' FOR BREAKFAST, EH, READERS!?!

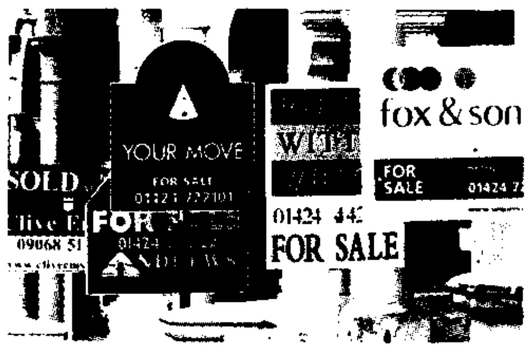
Daily Mail
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2009

WILL RISING HOUSE PRICES CAUSE HOUSE PRICE FALL?

by Our Entire Staff

AS HOUSE prices rallied yesterday, estate agents warned that the recent improvement in the housing market would inevitably lead to a potentially catastrophic collapse in house prices.

Said Sid and Doris Dacre, "Our newly-bought shooting estate in the Western Highlands was last week valued at



£1.9 million – and this week it's £2.3 million. If it carries on like this, we will be ruined."

Full story and pics **94-102**

What's wrong with British mustard?

by Columnist of the Year **Max Hastings**

What sort of country have we become when we don't even buy our own mustard?

I am old enough to remember a time when English mustard was revered throughout the world for its honest, robust, manly flavour, the proud product of an island race.

Keep going, Ed

No true Englishman would have dreamed of sitting down to a delicious plate of roast beef without the accompaniment of a jar of glorious yellow English mustard, preferably made by Mr Colman.

No one would have had the gall to smear their meat with that filthy browm muck that passes for mustard across the Channel.

Some way to go yet, Ed

Yet now we are told that our once great country has sunk so low that sales of English mustard have collapsed.

Worse still, we learn, the sales are soaring of that disgusting French substitute which they have the cheek to call 'moutarde' (note that they've even stolen our word for it).

No wonder we lost the empire and are now reduced to sucking up to *(cont. p. 94)*

● Is English mustard better than French? Do you have an opinion or do you have a mustard story that you would like to share? Phone, email or text now to help us fill up our jar (surely pages? Ed.)

GNOMEBY'S
LONDON

A collection of Royal memorabilia, formerly the property of Prince and Princess Michael of Kent

Lots include

One ornamental red silk chair, as sat in by the late Duke of Kent at the Coronation of George VI

One red leather-style chair, as sat in by Princess Michael of Kent during the Coronation Street omnibus edition

One de-luxe gentleman's razor from Mitchell & Webb of Bond Street (as never used by HRH Prince Michael)

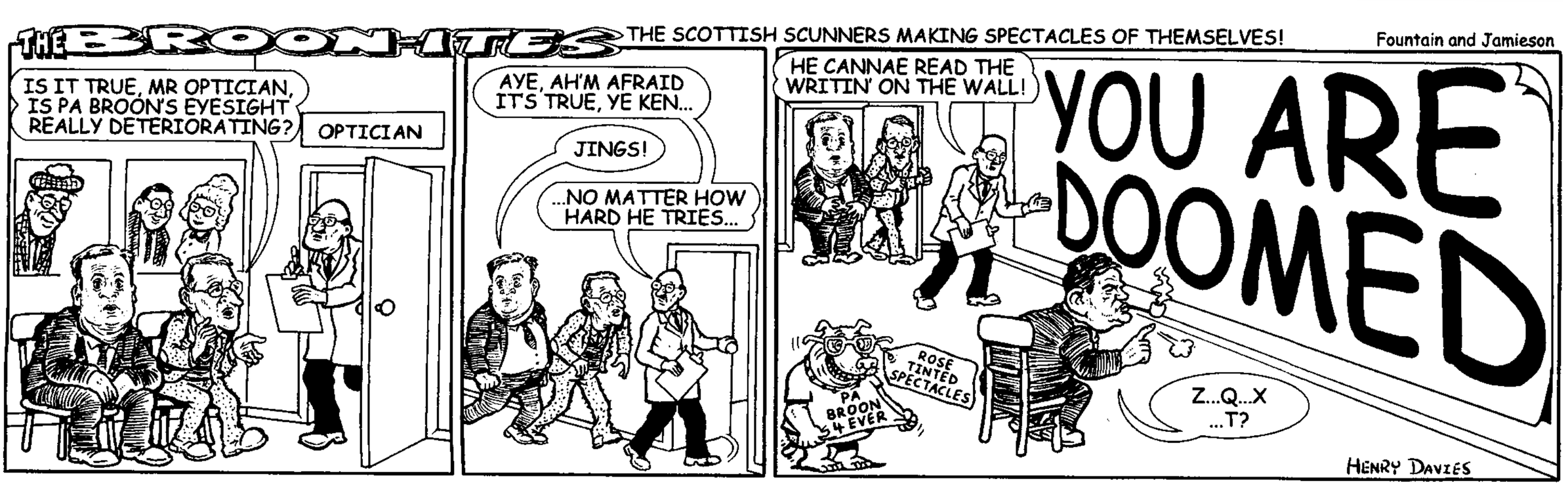
One complete set of seven thousand unsold copies of "The History of Royal Trouserpresses" by Princess Michael (Fawn & Cringe £29.99)

One eviction notice signed by Her Majesty the Queen, bearing the message "Get out of Kensington Palace by Friday, Pushy, or I'll send the bailiffs in"

One pair jack boots, part of the full dress uniform of an Obergruppenführer in the Waffen SS. As worn by Baron von Ribena-Schnitzel in the invasion of Alsace-Lorraine-Heggezy

One car boot belonging to the estate of Prince Michael

GNOMEBY'S
*What a **lot** of rubbish!*

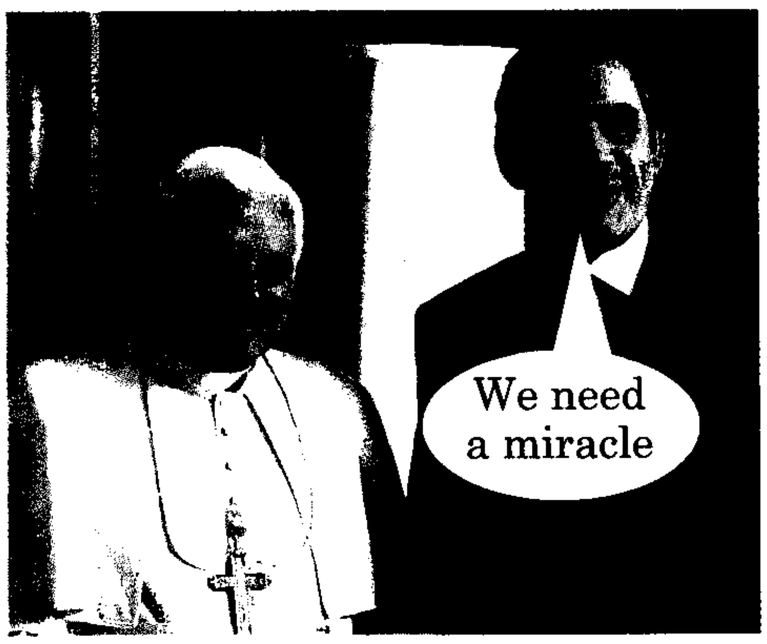

THE BROON-ITES
THE SCOTTISH SCUNNERS MAKING SPECTACLES OF THEMSELVES!
Fountain and Jamieson
IS IT TRUE, MR OPTICIAN, IS PA BROON'S EYESIGHT REALLY DETERIORATING?
OPTICIAN
AYE, AH'M AFRAID IT'S TRUE, YE KEN...
JINGS!
...NO MATTER HOW HARD HE TRIES...
HE CANNAE READ THE WRITIN' ON THE WALL!
YOU ARE DOOMED
PA BROON 4 EVER
ROSE TINTED SPECTACLES
Z...Q...X ...T?
HENRY DAVIES

BROWN'S WEAK

(Surely 'week'? Ed.)

CLIMATE CHANGE

POPE VISIT



HEALTH SCARE

ALL THIS WEEK

FREE inside your 'WHIZZER AND CHIPS', 'BUNTY' and 'BEANO' – **A copy of the Guardian!** Enjoy once again all your favourite classic comic characters including:

★ Alan the Menace and his dog Rubbisher
Watch him get into all kind of scrapes trying to close down the Observer!

★ Roy of the Greenslades
Scorching media tales for boys! Great attack, Roy!

★ Roger the Alton
The naughtiest boy on the block! He's got f***ing Tourettes!
(strip discontinued)

★ Marina the Minx
Ooh, she's catty! Watch out celebs!

PLUS

The Fleet Street Kids
Hilarious antics of the unpaid graduate interns!

George Monbiot
Chilling warning of the threat to the planet posed by global warming *(Is this right? Ed.)*

Tomorrow – For Girls
Free copy of Jackie (Ashley) including the classic Polly Of Toynbee Hall *(That's enough. Ed)*

DIGNITAS WELCOMES RULING

THE Dignitas Clinic in Switzerland say they expect business will be booming following the Government's recent clarification of the law on assisted suicide.

Said a spokesman, "That's why, for a limited time we're offering two lethal injections for the price of one. Yes that's two great lethal injections so you can help two family members not to be a burden any longer. What an offer! Bump one off. Get one free." *(Reuters)*

Your assisted suicide tick-box guidelines in full

I am terminally ill and want to die by:

- ☐ **a)** Lethal injection
- ☐ **b)** Knife-wielding hoodie
- ☐ **c)** Strictly Come Dancing being extended to run over two hours
- ☐ **d)** Listening to Gordon's Conference speech
- ☐ **e)** All of the above

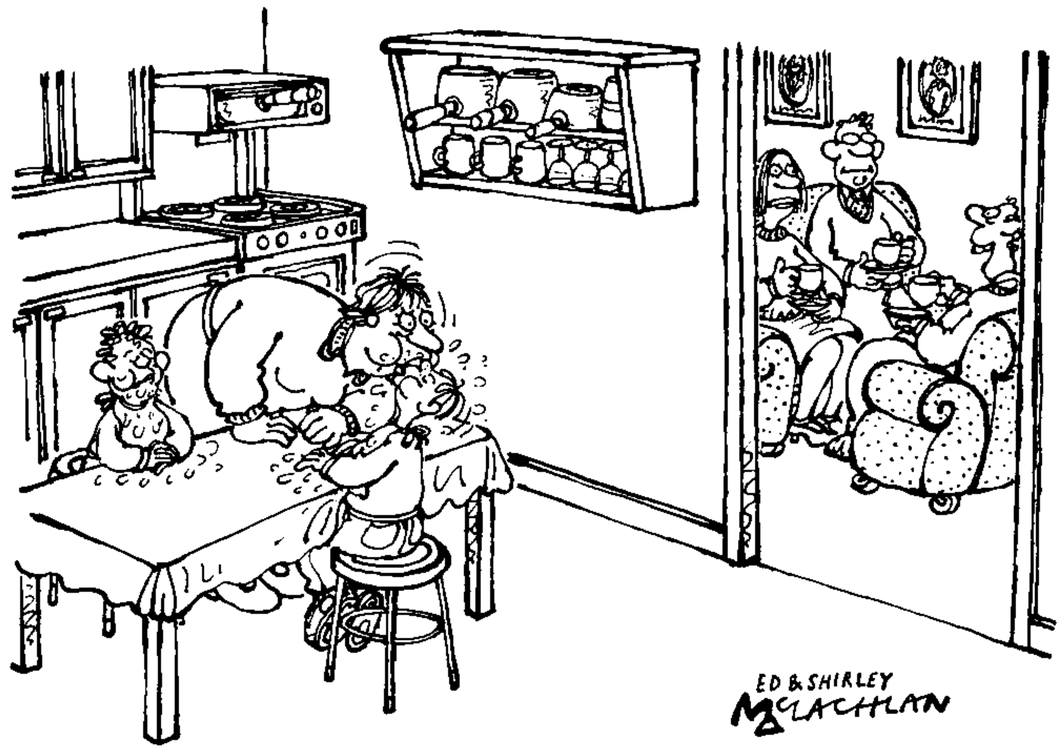
EYE TV

What Celebrity Raped Katie Next

Living TV Tues. 9.00pm

In her new distorted reality show, former glamour model Katie Price makes yet more vague sensationalist accusations of rape against unnamed celebrities to sell a few tabloid newspapers *(Surely 'raise the level of awareness about violence against women'? Ed.)*

Eye Rating: You'll feel like you've been violated.



"We find we're saving a lot of money during this recession by regurgitating food"

"A han-n-nd gun!?"

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL BROADSHEETS

Fruity Lesbian Teacher: The Verdict

BY OUR SCHOOLS CORRESPONDENT QUENTIN LECH

There were emotional scenes yesterday when the verdict came through at last in the High Court.

Yes, the press would be allowed to continue its relationship with the fruity lesbian teacher who seduced the schoolgirl.

Earlier there had been fears that the press would be stopped from seeing the teacher on the front page but reason prevailed and a possible draconian ban was lifted, meaning all highbrow papers could justifiably run the story at enormous length.

Said one editor, "This is a proper love affair. We love the fruity lesbian teacher very much." He continued, "In these sorts of cases you have to look at the bigger picture – which is on page three. Phwoarr!"

Full story and More Pix p4-94

CLASSIC FAIRY STORIES

THE FRANGLAIS EDITION

The Princess And The Frog

by Former President **Giscard d'Estaing**

UNE FOIS upon a time, une très handsome grenouille (i.e. moi) was sitting à un grand banquet next to une belle Princess qui s'appellait Le Princess Diana de Cardiff (Gettez-vous it?).

Et guessez what!

La Princess a tombé tête over heels en love avec la grenouille immediatement.

"Vous êtes la plus sexy old grenouille I've ever recontré," elle purred.

Et puis elle à kissed le vieux frog.

Et zap! Paff! Zut alors!

"Je didn't expect that!" exclamé la belle Princesse de Wales.

Because connaissez-vous what had happened, mes enfants?

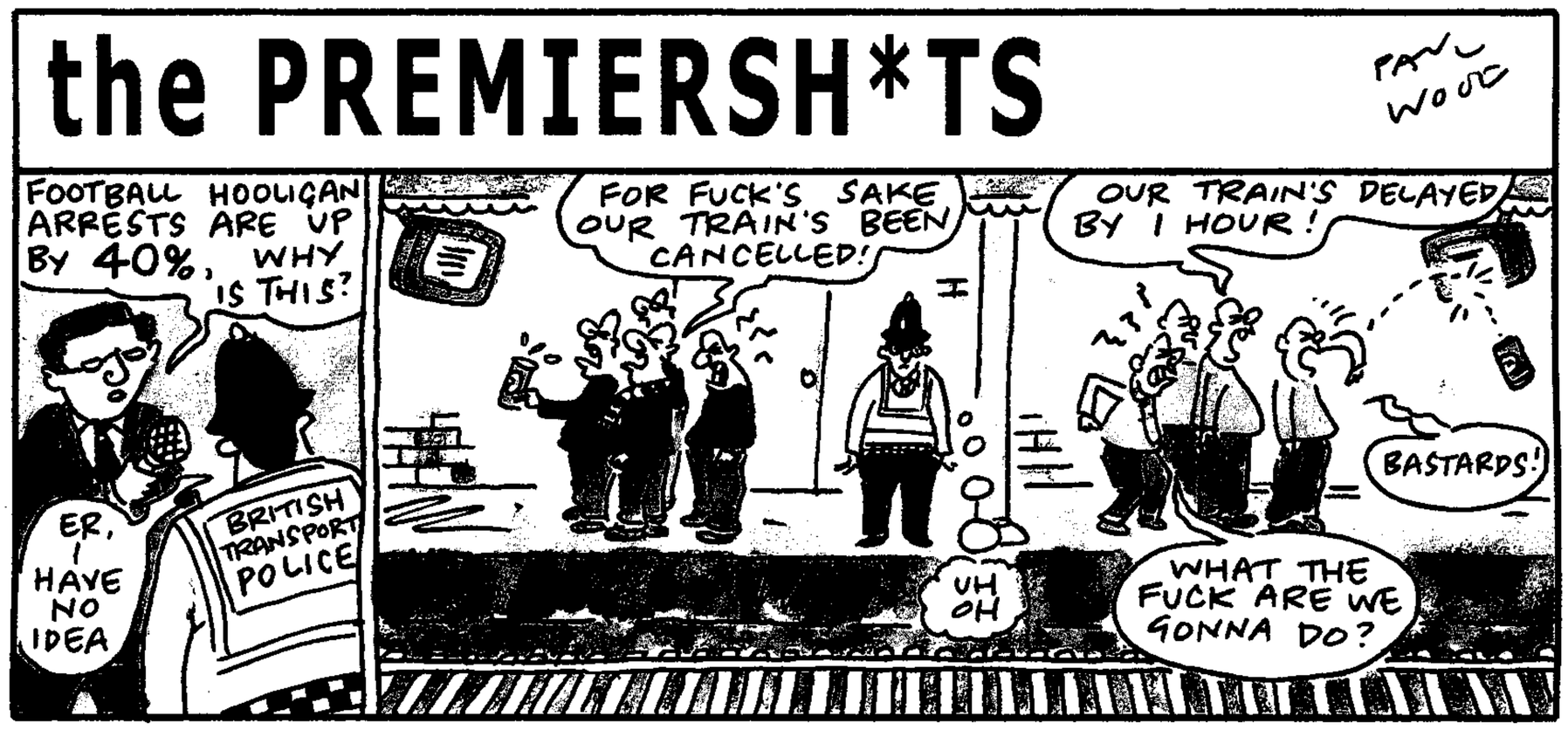
Oui! C'est vrai! La vieux grenouille ne turned pas into un handsome President.

Non! He turned into un very piss-pauvre noveliste instead!! Quelle surprise!

Et tout le monde laughed happily ever après. *(Surely 'lived'? Ed).*

© The Late Kilometres Kington.

the PREMIERSH*TS


FOOTBALL HOOLIGAN ARRESTS ARE UP BY 40%, WHY IS THIS?
ER, I HAVE NO IDEA
BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE
FOR FUCK'S SAKE OUR TRAIN'S BEEN CANCELLED!
OUR TRAIN'S DELAYED BY 1 HOUR!
BASTARDS!
UH OH
WHAT THE FUCK ARE WE GONNA DO?

Those LIDLs In Full

LIDL, downmarket supermarket peddling cheap goods.

ROD LIDL, downmarket columnist peddling cheap articles in the Sunday Times.

RICHARD LIDL JOHN, downmarket columnist peddling cheap articles in the Daily Mail.

LIDL BRITAIN, downmarket TV show peddling cheap jokes on the BBC.

MIDL BRITAIN, downmarket country which *(That's enough, Ed.)*

School news

St Cakes

A number of unexpected vacancies have arisen amongst the teaching staff of the prestigious independent £300,000-a-term Midlands school. The music teacher, Miss Strumpet-Blower, is leaving to take up a position at Holloway. The Head of Biology, Mr Peter File, has taken early retirement and is continuing his studies into human sexuality at Wormwood Scrubs. The entire Geography, Art, Classics and Maths department have also departed the school to work with other teachers in Wandsworth Prison Library. Applicants for the resulting 37 vacant posts are asked to apply at once, giving details of academic qualifications, CRB status, criminal records, etc. We also have an unexpected vacancy for one dinner lady (blind applicants only). Write to the Bursar, Major Trouser-Fumbler, The Old Gropery, St Cakes, Beds.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Keith Floyd, TV Chef

So. Farewell
Then Keith
Floyd.

You died
As you lived –
A *bon viveur*
To the end.

This was the menu
For your last
Meal on earth.

Six dozen oysters.
Roast swan with
Custard.
Jelly trifle with
Mashed potato.

Washed down with
3 bottles champagne,
1 crate Guinness,
2 cartons Marlboro
Cigarettes, and
A small glass of
Brandy.

Yes, it was a
Good way
To go.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

PS: So. Farewell
Also Patrick
Swayze and Mary from
Peter, Paul And
Mary who sadly
Got less attention – even
From me.

DIARY

It had been a hugely successful tour. Once again, the Canadians had shown that they loved her and she had shown she loved Canada.

"I have never known anyone who could wave half as brilliantly as Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother" recalls a close aide. "She had this extraordinary ability to hold her right hand up in the air and then – and this is where the real skill comes in – to move it, with amazing delicacy, very gently from side to side. And she really could do that for literally minutes at a time. I've honestly never seen anything like it."

Another onlooker found himself entranced by her singular ability to combine this skill with another. "I remember looking at her in her carriage. She was already performing that outstanding wave – it literally radiated sunbeams from its epicentre – when it suddenly struck me that she was also doing something else, equally remarkable. Yes, she was waving – but at one and the same time she was also smiling!"

And by all accounts, that smile was the most perfect smile the world had ever seen. "I don't know how she does it," one courtier confided to his diary, "But it has something to do with her mouth. Somehow she manages to raise both ends at the same time. As if by magic, she creates a smile, and she then holds that smile for several seconds and turns her head, so that everyone can see it. I have never seen such selflessness and generosity. The effect is transcendent. In the shadow of that gracious smile, I have witnessed entire nations moved to tears of consummate joy, peace and understanding."

By the time Queen Elizabeth arrived back from her tour of Canada, the Vietnam war had been brought to an end, world trade was prospering once more, thousands of patients had been cured of their illnesses, and Britain was enjoying a glorious heatwave.

Once again, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother had smiled her way into the hearts of the people. "It's so very thrilling" she confessed in a letter to Queen Mary. "The little Canadians simply ADORE me!!!!"

WILLIAM SHAWCROSS: QUEEN ELIZABETH THE QUEEN MOTHER

There seemed little doubt that the tour had been an outstanding success. She had embarked on it a joyous, vivacious and delightful wife and mother. She emerged from it a delightful, vivacious and joyous mother and wife, but expert observers noticed an added enchantment, natural dignity and radiant beauty.

But there was to be no let-up in her hectic schedule. All were agreed that there was not a worker in the nation who toiled as hard as she. Just five days after her return, she was booked to attend a luncheon in her honour with a few close friends at The Savoy Hotel. "The poor woman must have been exhausted," remembers one of those in attendance. "But she refused to show it."

She arrived at The Savoy dressed informally in a white satin dress with square décolleté and puff sleeves flounced with old lace, embroidered over the previous three years by elderly members of the Royal School of Needlework with diamante emblems of the British Isles and Empire. Three rows of gold galloon lace ran the edge of the train. She was greeted by her old friend Ruth, Lady Fermoy, who showed her place at the top of the table, where she sat with a consummate ease borne of long tradition.

"I frankly don't know how she did it," recalled a delighted guest. "But somehow, in this single perfect gesture, Her Majesty bent her knees and sat down straight onto the chair. I truly can't remember when I last saw someone sitting down so perfectly, and with such ineffable grace."

The table was presented with a vast meat pie. With her wonderful manners – widely regarded as the most wonderful manners in the world – Queen Elizabeth set her guests at their ease by lifting both hands, as though in a wave, and then plunging her fingers straight into the pie.

"It was a magnificent spontaneous gesture" one of them recalls. "Without the slightest bit of fuss or bother, and with an intuitive empathy for the pie, she put both hands straight into that pie. Queen Elizabeth confided in me later that it was a trick she had picked up from her morale-boosting visits to the East End during the war. Lovable Cockneys who had been bombed out of house and home loved to watch this beautifully dressed lady stepping out of her Bentley to share their plight for a few minutes. In return, one of them must have taught her how to stick all one's fingers in a pie.

"Absolutely delicious and utterly delightful!"

As Ruth, Lady Fermoy struck up a delicious selection of wartime favourites on the Savoy piano, a delighted Queen Elizabeth wriggled her delightful fingers in the delicious pie.

Her simple pleasure was evident to all present.

"Her Majesty's ability to wriggle her fingers about in that pie was both infectious and inspiring," recorded Lord St John of Fawnsley in his diary. "It was a habit, much enjoyed by her friends, that she had perfected over so many long years of stalwart and dutiful service to the people, both human and native, of the Commonwealth."

What was it that allowed Queen Elizabeth to stick her fingers in so many pies?

Many saw it as her intuitive sense, derived from years of experience, that socialism sought to drag everything down into uniform and unimaginative drabness.

To the end, she remained firm in her belief that the pie was best served by her fingers, and hers alone.

Her perspicacious wit remained very much to the fore. "Oh yummy, yummy!" she remarked, with her trademark spontaneity.

With that, she pulled her fingers out of the pie and waved them around and around, to the delight of guests and staff alike. In the corner, Ruth, Lady Fermoy struck up "Any Old Iron" on the pianoforte, and the delight of the world was unconfined.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

I THINK IT'S BRILLIANT - DAME VERA LYNN BEATING THE BEATLES AND TOPPING THE CHARTS...
SHE'S REPLACED BOB DYLAN AND BECOME THE OLDEST LIVING ARTIST IN THE WORLD TO HAVE A NUMBER ONE ALBUM
WHAT AN ACHIEVEMENT! SHE'S 92!
THE OLDEST TO TOP THE CHARTS, EH? AS A ROCK STAR, PROUD TO BE BRITISH, IT GIVES ME THIS ENORMOUS WARM FEELING OF...
RELIEF?
TOO RIGHT. THAT'S ONE ACCOLADE NONE OF US WANT.
CLINK

Literary Review

Crashing symbols

The Lost Symbol
Dan Brown
(Bantam Press, £18.99)

HOW difficult it must be to be Dan Brown. Oh yes, there's all the money, and the thrill of seeing your books made into awful films starring Tom Hanks, and there's some more money, and after that, lots more money. But think of the pressure.

Before *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown was just another thriller writer with a halfway decent idea and a long list of adjectives whose meanings he wasn't quite sure of. For *The Lost Symbol*, he's one of the two or three bestselling authors in the world. Whole corporations could rise or fall on the success of this book. Printers, publishers and booksellers will be flinging themselves out of tenth-floor windows if, as widely rumoured, the book turns out to be rubbish.

But how rubbish is rubbish? Let us not forget the words of Richard Eyre, who described *The Da Vinci Code* as "quite astonishingly badly written... It's as bad as a bad novel by Jeffrey Archer. It's so bad that even Erich von Däniken would scorn its prose." Could *The Lost Symbol* be any worse than that? And if so, how?

The good news is that Brown has finally found a new way of starting a book. "Physicist Leonardo Vetra smelled burning flesh, and he knew it was his own" was the first sentence of *Angels and Demons*. "Renowned curator Jacques Saunière staggered through the vaulted archway of the museum's Grand Gallery" kicked off *The Da Vinci Code*. This journalistic clamping-together of job description and character name might well be bestselling author Dan Brown's distinguishing stylistic tic, but he manages to avoid it here until page 18 ("newly hired security guard Alfonso Nuñez"). Instead he starts with "The secret is how to die. Since the beginning of time, the secret had always been how to die." Clever stuff: it almost sounds as though it might mean something.

Soon we're back with turtleneck-wearing everydon Robert Langdon, "sitting all alone in the enormous cabin of a Falcon 2000EX corporate jet as it bounced its way through turbulence. In the background, the dual Pratt & Whitney engines hummed evenly." (© Sylvie Krin.) Langdon has been summoned to Washington DC by his old friend and mentor, billionaire philanthropist Peter Solomon, who isn't the same old friend and mentor as the ones who let him down so badly in previous books. Unfortunately Solomon has been kidnapped by a tattooed lunatic and master of disguise, who clearly yearns to stroke a white cat, if only someone else hadn't done it first.

"Who the hell are you?" says Langdon when the lunatic rings him up. "Do not be alarmed, professor. You have been summoned here for a reason." In fact, that's one of the more convincing lines of dialogue, in that it doesn't sound like an undergraduate lecture. Popular misconception has it that Brown writes nonstop action thrillers, whereas it often takes Langdon two or three pages to walk across a foyer. At one point, while the lunatic is escaping across town, cackling evilly, Langdon and other characters stand around talking for several chapters. The professor is supposed to wear his learning lightly; Brown wears his like a suit of armour, carrying an anvil.

But is the writing really so bad? Brown's sentences rarely sing, but only a few actually scream in pain. "The wooden stairs descending to the Capitol's sub-basement were as steep and shallow as any stairs Langdon had ever traversed." Another character "had never married. Science had become her life partner". It's obviously the writing of someone who can't write, whose overloaded metaphors repeatedly collapse on top of him, who thinks you should use words such as "atop" and "commence" when other, simpler words will do. But Richard Eyre went too far: he is nowhere as near as bad as Jeffrey Archer. At least Brown gives the impression that English is his first language. And there's none of the Archole's hubris or vainglory here.

Indeed, what really characterises Brown's prose is a callowness, almost an innocence. There's nothing cynical about these books. The density of Brown's research flatters his readers, the riddles puzzle them for a page or two, but the straight lines of his plots make almost no intellectual demands at all. (The great plot twist is signposted so clearly that your cat would get it.) The lack of sophistication is absolute: it can't be faked. And for a thriller writer, his conclusions are courageously optimistic and good-natured.

Thousands, if not millions of thrillers have fingered the Freemasons as shadowy, power-mad conspirators whose enemies occasionally end up hanging under Blackfriars Bridge. Brown genuinely appears to believe that Freemasonry is a force for good in the world, much misunderstood and under-appreciated. He also thinks that science and religion are essentially the same thing, and that we can all work together to make the world safe for future generations to live in perfect harmony – just as long as we can run away fast enough from the CIA.

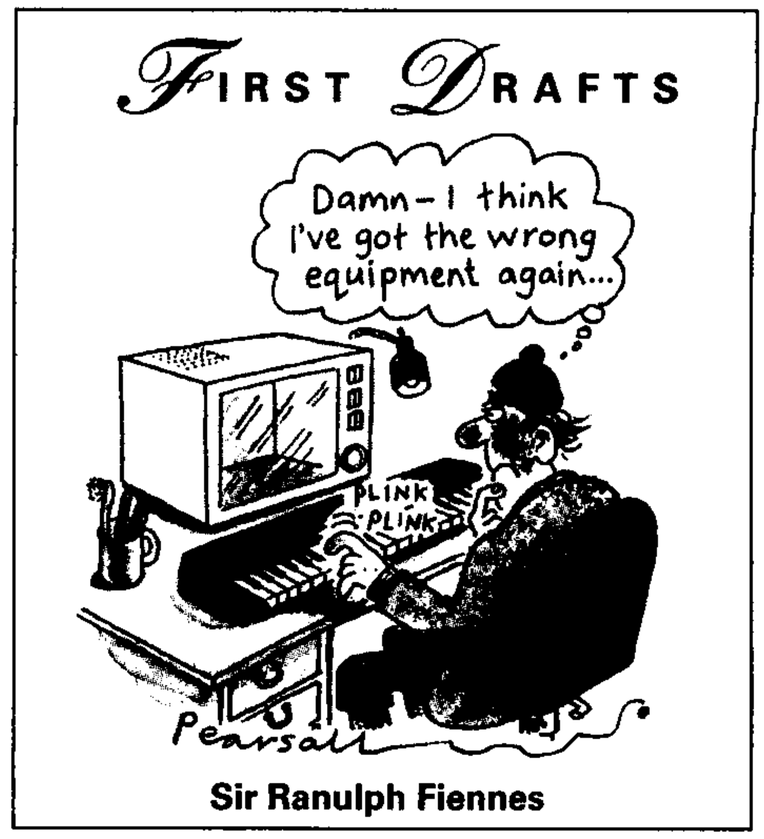
The Lost Symbol is indeed rubbish, but it's harmless rubbish. Is that such a terrible thing?

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Sprouts like to dance around in lots of boiling water with very little salt." – *Nigel Slater*, Tender: Volume 1 *(Fourth Estate, 2009)*

"Brussels sprouts have never grabbed me... the trick is to keep them well away from boiling water." – *Nigel Slater*, Real Fast Food *(Penguin, 1993)*

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
ANT & DEC BOOK SIGNING
WHICH SIGNATURE'S ANT AND WHICH ONE'S DEC?
ANT & DEC
I'M A CELEBRITY BOOK - GET ME OUT OF HERE!
IT'S SOMETHING TO READ WHEN THEY'RE ON THE TELLY



Sir Ranulph Fiennes

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ THE BACK of Canongate's jacket for *The Death of Bunny Munro*, doom-mongering rocker Nick Cave's inspiring tale of a salesman obsessed with shagging his female customers and with the pudendas of Avril Lavigne, Beyoncé, Britney Spears and Kylie Minogue, offers a possibly unprecedented line-up of fulsome testimonials from big names.

"The work of one of the great cross-genre storytellers of our age," typically raves Irvine Welsh, who risks comparing Cave to Franz Kafka and Cormac McCarthy; and Neil LaBute, Will Self and David Peace follow suit.

But how disinterested are these admirers? Welsh and Self are both on the Canongate roster, although the Scottish indy is not their main publisher; Peace chaired a Southbank Centre event with Cave promoting the novel; and LaBute owes him a favour after using one of his song titles, *The Mercy Seat*, as the name of a play. As recommenders, they're not recommended.

■ LAST week the BBC invited the public to submit their "true untold real-life stories" for a TV series next year called *My Story*, and the omens don't look good.

Asked to tell their true tales in 300-1,500 words, contestants are offered the prospect of passing through heats to reach the final 15, who will appear on telly. Up to five, but possibly only one, will win a publishing deal with part of HarperCollins.

One cause for cynicism is the brazen copycat-ism of the project, as ITV's *Alan Titchmarsh Show* similarly asked for submissions for a "People's Author" contest earlier this year, with a publisher's cheque – Orion this time – again the enticement. Another is the depressing recourse to the inevitable reality TV format: reciting a personal experience will clearly be more awkward, even painful, to put through the X *Factor*-style judging process than singing, dancing or cooking.

With no guidance on what kind of story the "panel of expert storytellers" is likely to find most appealing (will mini misery memoirs beat anything lightweight, or are

amiable anecdotes best? Is enhancement of the facts allowed?), plenty of hopefuls seem bound to send work that will instantly be rejected as unsuitable. And life will not be easy, one imagines, even for the winner or winners given a book deal. They, after all, will have already told their most memorable story – quite possibly their life encapsulated – at least once on national television; even assuming they have enough other material to turn a short yarn into a full-sized book, book-buyers are liable to be suspicious that the rest is padding.

■ READERS hoping to find full details of the "unspeakable act of degradation… a bizarre sex act too revolting to describe" which a rent boy claimed Lib Dem Mark Oaten enjoyed having "performed on him" will be disappointed by the MP's new memoir, *Screwing Up: How One MP Struggled with Politics, Scandal and Middle Age*.

"We never had sexual intercourse," is all Oaten has to say about the matter, a statement which makes a nonsense of his chosen title and merely confirms what Tomasz, 23, told the *News of the World* in 2006: "We never had full sex but we did everything else."

Bloomsbury faced financial disaster when it splashed out £400,000 on *The Blunkett Tapes* without ensuring the ex-minister would include some insights into the mistress and lovechild that led to his resignation somewhere in its 870 pages. So which publisher has been foolish enough to repeat the mistake with Oaten? Step forward Biteback, a company formed in July by former Conservative candidate Iain Dale to plug "a huge gap in the current affairs publishing market which needs filling".

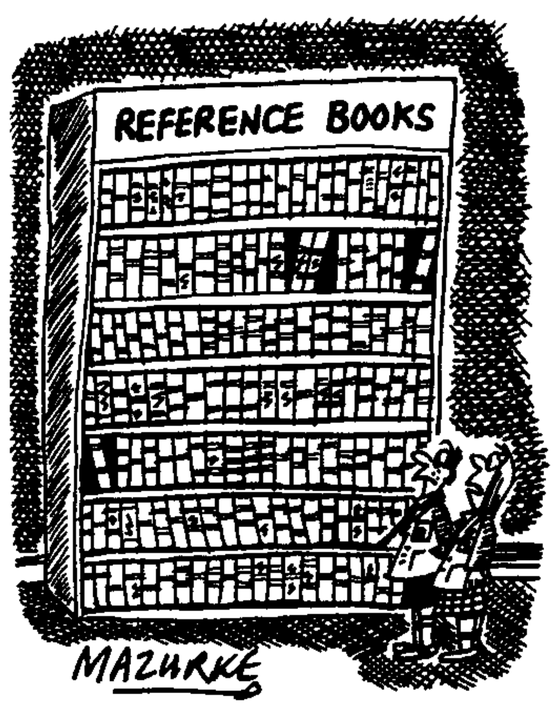
Dale's former outfit, Politico's Publishing, was behind the 1999 worstseller *In My Own Time: Reminiscences of a Liberal Leader*, by Jeremy Thorpe. Despite being billed as "a fascinating collection of anecdotes and reminiscences", that book didn't manage to mention the one thing readers were interested in either.

■ AS BUDGETS and sections shrink across the Street of Shame, one of the few perks remaining for literary editors is selling on the hundreds of review copies foisted on them by optimistic publishers. Are their offerings gratefully received?

Er, no. "We could never shift our review copies of any hardback literary fiction," one recently departed literary editor from a national title tells the *Eye*. "The bookseller who comes in to take them off our hands is really enthusiastic about music books and celeb stuff – she'll take misery memoirs and any pap and rubbish we've got – but all the literary fiction just goes to the charity shop. There's no market for it, apparently."

So what genre features most heavily in said review section? "Oh, literary fiction."

'Bookworm'



"One day all this will be Google's"

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS, Pt 94

The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham

Selina Hastings

(John Murray £25)

…But it was in 1938, as storm-clouds gathered over Europe, that life at the Villa Mauresque, Maugham's sumptuous Riviera hideaway, reached a zenith of *luxe, volupté et sodomie*. With its nine acres of annually renewed lawns, manicured each morning by a platoon of scissor-wielding house-boys, its regiment of Nubian body-guards, its immaculately accoutred yacht the *Epicene* moored in the adjoining bay, and its pack of timber wolves ready to be unleashed on poor people who rang the bell in search of fragments of discarded *pâté de foie gras*, the villa was a magnet for Maugham's galaxy of stylish and well-connected friends.

As Lady Bobo d'Armagnac, a fixture at "Morrers" during this time, recalled in her delicate memoir *Still Waits the Cab*, "Willie was really the most divine host, for whom nothing was too much trouble. I particularly remember the family of rare Peruvian guinea-pigs that he'd had sent over from Fortnums and trained to balance cocktail-glasses on their noses, so that they could carry very dry mint-flavoured martinis out to the guests as they sat on the terrace. Really, you know, he put the art into smart, and it's something he's never been given credit for."

Although leaving the day-to-day running of the establishment to his attentive secretary Gavin Mincing, who as Lady Bobo recalled in her stately way, "was always about his person", Maugham was always prepared to treat those staying at the villa to shafts of his legendary wit. When the celebrated actress Tabitha Fishcake, star of *Don't, Darling, Don't*, remarked of her recent trip to Spain that it had rained incessantly, Maugham took only a moment to remark "Mainly on the plain, I imagine", to the great amusement of Charlie Chaplin and the Duke of Windsor, who sat nearby.

On another occasion the distinguished physicist Sir Horace Faulks committed the unpardonable solecism of arriving at the gate without an appointment. Barely looking up from the game of Snap on which he was engaged with Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Greta Garbo and the Mahatma Gandhi, Maugham instructed his butler to "tell Sir Horace that I am not at Ohm", a sally which caused the Mahatma to laugh so uproariously that his false teeth fell out into the *brie en gelée* which even that notoriously ascetic figure had been prevailed upon to sample.

As an enthusiastic sponsor of his friends' careers, Maugham was always keen to entertain young men of wit, charm and vivacity of whom, as he put it, "something might be made". Visitors at this time included the Hon. Peregrine Joyboy, author of *Droop, Dahlias* and *Lost Amidst Loosestrife*, Hyacinth "Frisky" Frisk, of whom Maugham observed enigmatically "Hyacinth will undoubtedly go far on those legs of his", and the rising young interior decorator Antoine de Froufrou. In his somewhat catty memoir, *Payment Deferred*, the Hon. Peregrine recalled that he "only had to look at my collection of Cartier cigarette cases to remember just how much I owe to Willie".

It is also interesting to note that Maugham wrote a great many highly successful stage plays, several of which were turned into Hollywood films, and a number of best-selling novels, which for some reason hardly anyone reads these days… [*continues for hundreds of pages*]

Joy

On the back of this three-letter word, we built a company./Independent of everyone./ Accountable to no-one but the driver./We don't just build cars./We are the creators of emotion./ We are the guardians of ecstasy, the thrills and chills./The laughs and smiles, and all the words that can't be found in a dictionary./We are the Joy of Driving./No company car can rival our history./Replicate our passion, our vision./ Innovation is our backbone, but Joy is our heart./We will not stray from our three-letter purpose. We will nurture it./We will make Joy smarter. We will push it, test it, break it – then build it again./More efficient, more dynamic./We will give the world the keys to Joy, and they will take it for a drive./And while others try to promise everything, we promise one thing./The most personal, cherished and human of all emotions/This is the story of BMW./This is the story of Joy.

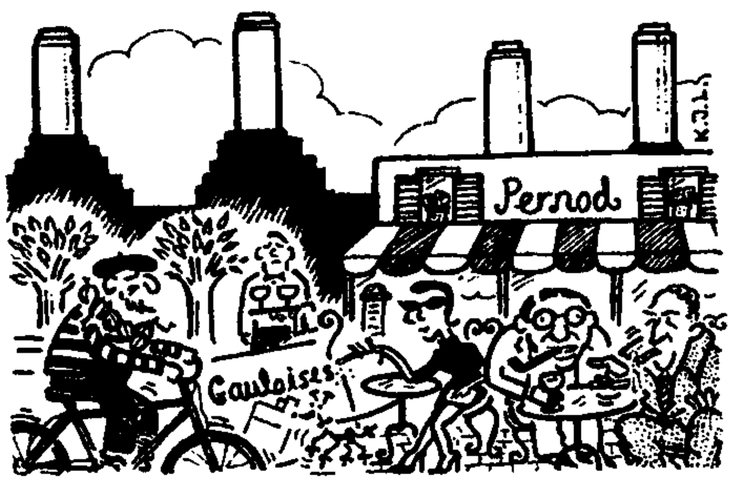
Advertisement

Why is the cape so special?

It was the first piece of costume I commissioned for my album The Bachelor – from a designer called Aida Zanditon. For the track "Vulture" I wanted to become a human vulture, quite cadaverous. That single's about being so deep in your depression that you're waiting for a vulture to come and take the dead parts, so the cape is like a ritual piece. I normally wear it with a bondage-style headpiece, leather shirt and trousers – not in a YMCA way, but in a primeval, warrior sense. Put together, it feels like I'm fighting a war.

PATRICK WOLF,
Observer

Pseuds Corner



The concept of a hotel on the capital's new Left Bank in the culturally prosperous environ of a bustling Battersea is a key step forward in formalising the intellectual renaissance of Battersea, not unlike the discovery and patronage of the Seine's Rive Gauche by intellectual greats like Sartre, de Beauvoir, Zola, Camus or Hemingway and Fitzgerald.

Press release from the Rafayel hotel, Battersea

Lugging my Edinburgh international film festival catalogue, I feel like Sisyphus, once more preparing to ascend the heights of British film. I remind myself of what Camus said: we must imagine that Sisyphus is happy.

JASON SOLOMONS enters the multiplex cinema at Fountainbridge, Edinburgh, *Observer Film* Magazine

We're not allowed tea-bags. Simon wilts tea leaves over steam and mixes his own blend.

YASMIN LE BON,
Guardian Weekend

Thoughts on cricket and ancient history: Thucydides is to Herodotus as Boycott is to Gower. One is rigorous application and puffed-up pomposity, the other easy grace and self-deprecating charm.

JUSTIN MAROZZI, *Spectator*

CONTRIBUTORS: Francis Harvey, Tom Masters, Rhodri Marsden, Robin Pomeroy, Alison Johnston, Paul Mathieu.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

FIGHTING NHS FRAUD

His and hers

WITH tough times ahead the NHS will be relying on its auditors and fraud-busters to cut out the waste. Yet one NHS body responsible for exactly these jobs is rather more effective at lining its bosses' own pockets, the *Eye* has discovered.

The Parkhill audit agency was formed in the early 1990s by the man who remains chief executive, Ivan Doncaster, through the merger of the Parkside and Hillingdon health authorities' internal audit units. It has since expanded into a £13m, 145-strong organisation, still owned by the NHS and "hosted" by Imperial College Healthcare trust in Fulham, auditing and advising trusts across the south-east. Five years ago it also set up an internal NHS auditor recruitment agency, HFMA Parkhill, in association with the Healthcare Finance Profession Association, the professional body for NHS beancounters.

Officially Parkhill is a non-profit-making organisation. But figures seen by the *Eye* show that this is because a large profit on audit and anti-fraud services is swallowed up by a similar loss on the recruitment business. And the main reason for the loss is… big payouts for the bosses.

Among those doing very nicely is a certain Mrs Sheila Doncaster, the wife of Ivan who uses her maiden name of Tunstall for professional purposes and for whose services running the recruitment business in 2008/09 the NHS paid £150,000 (+ VAT) to a company owned by Mr & Mrs Doncaster called DMT Services Ltd. And that was before, in the final fortnight of the financial year, DMT billed the taxpayer for four separate quarterly bonuses of £10,000 (+ VAT), taking Mrs Doncaster's pay above that of a chief executive of a major NHS Trust. Strangely, the lucrative task of running a small recruitment function was awarded by Mr Doncaster to his own wife without being advertised.

Another man faring well from the war on fraud is the head of counter-fraud at Parkhill, Suki Pooni, who has also gone down the service company route favoured by so many NHS suits. In 2005 he ceased to be a regular NHS employee on around £70,000 a year and began to work through his own company, SSP Consultancy Ltd. This was with, of course, the hefty pay rise that goes with inserting the word "consultancy" – in his case doubling his pay to £140,000 (+ VAT) – and again without the position being advertised.

Other questionable activities at Parkhill include staff bonuses well above standard NHS payments totalling £330,000 last year, including a £69,000 pay-out to one beancounter, Alan Waterman. The organisation also manages to reclaim the VAT it pays for hiring finance managers when under HM Revenue & Customs rules this is not recoverable.

According to the *Eye's* sources, Imperial and the other trusts responsible for Parkhill have been aware of what's going on for some time but have failed to address the concerns. Perhaps the austerity everybody else in the health service is facing will force a rethink.

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

All at sea

IT SEEMS the new First Sea Lord and Commander-in-Chief Fleet, Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, has been tasked with an early cost-cutting mission.

News reaches the *Eye* that he has sent an internal email to the Fleet stating that the two new aircraft carriers, HMS *Queen Elizabeth* and HMS *Prince of Wales*, will be "discontinued". If true, this will be a huge blow to the Royal Navy and to the thousands of workers standing by to build and fit them out.

It will also be expensive. Contracts for the carriers were announced in July 2007 by Des "Swiss Toni" Browne and successive ministers have endorsed the project, Geoff Hoon slowing things up with a year's delay "to allow contractual and cost issues to be resolved".

Now contracts have been signed for everything from the actual assembly of the ships to the steel used, propulsion systems and weapons systems. The final paperwork was completed in July last year and steel for the *Queen Elizabeth* is already being cut at the Govan yard.

The problem for the navy is that despite all this, the escalating cost of the project is still far in excess of the cost of cancelling these contracts. Furthermore, delays in the US in Lockheed Martin's Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) make the case for "discontinuing" the carriers stronger. The JSF, says Lockheed Martin, may not be ready to replace the Royal Navy's ageing Sea Harriers until 2018, forcing the carriers to sail without planes for an embarrassingly long period.

Stopping the carrier project would not only be very costly for the Treasury but it would also be a disaster for the Navy, depriving it of a major force projection role and obliging it to reconsider contracts for the smaller ships that might have escorted the two ships in any task force. And as well as being a disaster for the shipyards concerned, it would also be a political disaster for the government. The cancelled carriers would be a symbol of defence procurement incompetence as great as the scrapping of the TSR-2 in 1965, which still dogs Harold Wilson's "reputation".

'Squarebasher'

POVERTY RELIEF

CDC's seedy bedfellows (2)

THE businesses backed by Britain's publicly-owned investment fund CDC, once the Commonwealth Development Corporation but now an anything-goes private equity-style investor, grow dodgier by the day.

The last *Eye* explained how CDC invests alongside some highly dubious Zimbabwean gold diggers and an Australian mining company, Anvil, that was heavily criticised when its vehicles were used to facilitate a massacre near its copper mine in DR Congo. Now Anvil has teamed up with the company with perhaps the world's worst current reputation: Trafigura, the commodities dealer that has just agreed, without admitting liability, to pay $30m to settle health claims against it over the illegal dumping of toxic chemical "slops" in Cote D'Ivoire by a sub-contractor. According to the UN there was evidence, disputed by Trafigura, that the "slops" killed 15 and made thousands ill.

Trafigura's other claims to infamy include busting Iraqi oil sanctions a few years ago. Yet by funding Anvil to the tune of $100m to run another Congolese mine, Trafigura will acquire a 40 percent stake and immense influence on how the money of its co-investor CDC – ie the British taxpayer – is spent.

Another line of business favoured by the profit-hungry CDC bosses is banking (even though, just like extracting Africa's mineral wealth, the industry isn't short of eager private speculators). Hence CDC's investment through private equity manager ECP in major Nigerian banks Intercontinental and Oceanic.

After questionable lending, both banks are in a group of five that have received a $5bn bailout from the Nigerian government. **So that's the Nigerian taxpayer (annual income: $1,000 per capita) bailing out the British development fund (annual income of its chief executive: more than $1m).** Meanwhile Intercontinental Bank chief executive Erastus Akingbola is wanted by the Lagos authorities after failing to appear to answer fraud investigators' questions on dodgy loans. He is reported to be somewhere in London.

Then there's the burgeoning business of nuclear mining. Although other development funds prohibit investment in the production of radioactive materials, CDC's rules ban it only when "primarily designed or primarily designated for military purposes". Hence the investment through private equity manager African Lion in companies such as African Energy Resources, a Zambian uranium miner based in Australia but registered for tax in Guernsey. AER is actively targeting India as a profitable market for its investments, where it will doubtless ensure no uranium ends up in the country's expanding nuclear arsenal.

CDC says it abides by EU "environment, social and governance" standards. But when the *Eye* asked the EU to see copies, a spokesman replied: "Sorry, not available for distribution" and pointed us to CDC... which also refuses to hand over the standards it says it abides by. So much for the "transparency and accountability" promised in CDC's investment code.

QUANGOS

Safe as houses (for some)

SUPER-QUANGO the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) has scored plenty of brownie points for the government since its launch last December. It has boasted of wielding its £5bn budget to rescue homeowners threatened with repossession and to get house building back off the blocks.

The HCA has been far more discreet, however, about the poor state of its own finances. Accounts for its predecessor, English Partnerships (EP), were quietly posted in July on a website supposedly defunct since its liabilities were passed to the HCA last December. They showed that EP made a £492m operating loss in its last eight months and saw £320m wiped off the value of its land bank.

The organisation had previously enjoyed star status at the Treasury for paying its way by making tidy profits from development deals. However, the housing market collapse saw EP's sales receipts plummet from a healthy £328m the previous year to a measly £32.9m in 2008. It was forced to beg the government for an extra £67m of funding on top of the £64m it had already received.

It wasn't all bad news at the quango, though – three of EP's top brass walked away with redundancy payments totalling £277,000. The highest award, £128,000, went to regional director Duncan Hughes, who had been given a 36 percent pay rise the previous year.

GOBBLEDEGOOK

Stupid letter of the week

YET MORE nonsense continues to spew out from the correspondence departments of major companies who ought to know better.

A letter to one *Eye* reader from insurer Churchill contained this advice: "You have a legal responsible to have the tree check annual and keep a report that this as been carry our buy a tree surgeon." Er, what?

LOCKERBIE SPECIAL

The other names in the frame-up

AS THE political row continues on both sides of the Atlantic over the release of the "Lockerbie bomber", Ali Mohmed al Megrahi, scant attention is being paid to the atrocity which claimed 270 lives – and the fact that *whoever* was responsible for it did not act alone.

Documents released so far by Megrahi's lawyers highlight the lack of any credible evidence linking the convicted man to the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103. There is, however, a wealth of ignored material pointing towards others as the killers of the 270 who perished that December night.

Some of that material was available at Megrahi's 2000 trial; some has come to light since; and, as documents in the case reveal, much more remains hidden by governments and their law enforcement agencies – primarily, it appears, the United States.

One of the many disturbing aspects of the conviction by three judges, sitting without a jury at Zeist, in The Netherlands, was that there was before them even then far more "circumstantial" evidence of the guilt of named others than there ever was against Megrahi. But if the judges had to perform leaps of logic in order to convict the Libyan Megrahi, they were equally agile in dismissing evidence which pointed to others. As campaigners fight for a United Nations-led public inquiry, whether the evidence pointing to others will emerge remains to be seen. So what is known so far?

Terrorists-for-hire

WHEN Pan Am 103 was blasted from the skies on 21 December 1988, two Palestinian liberation splinter groups had effectively become terrorists-for-hire by other states.

The Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF) and the more prominent Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC), led by Ahmad Jibril, a former officer in the Syrian army, were working together from cells operating out of Germany, Sweden, Yugoslavia, Cyprus and – as became evident during the Lockerbie investigation – also out of Malta.

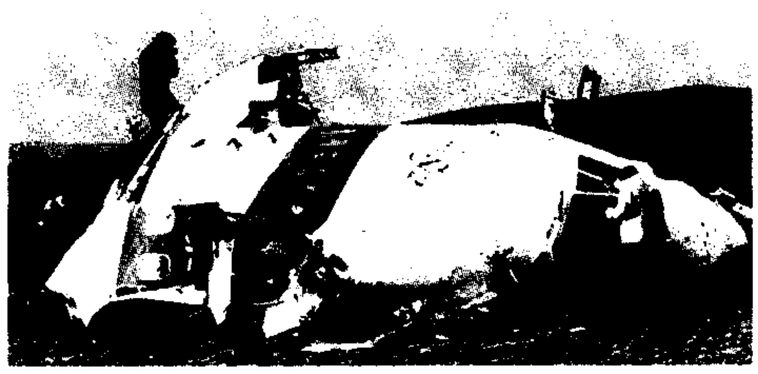
In a complex web of at least 16 known individuals, their aim was primarily Israeli and American targets. They had a long track record in state-sponsored terrorist activity, including the hijacking and bombing of aircraft. Indeed, it was surveillance of their activities in Germany, two months before the Lockerbie blast, that led to specific warnings to airlines and government agencies about terrorist threats to airlines and in particular Pan Am, shortly before the disaster.

One named PFLP member, Khaled Jafaar, actually travelled – and perished – on Pan Am 103, boarding in Frankfurt on the feeder flight en route to the US via Heathrow. Others in the German cell, led by Hafez Dalkamoni, were caught red-handed with improvised exploding devices in Toshiba and other music players, with barometric-triggered timers designed to explode in the air (remarkably similar to the Pan Am Toshiba bomb) – and a Pan Am timetable.

Marwan Khreesat, the bombmaker who assembled these devices, had turned informer/double agent and revealed to Jordanian and German police vital information about the German cell and its links to others and to paymasters in Syria – not, it seems, Libya. Between 1985 and 1988, he had made at least nine such bombs, some assembled in Syria, some in Germany. Not all of them were recovered. Khreesat was convicted in his absence of bombing Israeli El Al flights out of Rome and Amsterdam in 1972. He was arrested with Dalkamoni and others, but released – no doubt, because he was an informer – and is now believed to be living under protection in Jordan.

He who takes revenge

ANOTHER senior operator in the complex web was Abu Talb, aka "Intiquam" (he who takes revenge), a former Egyptian army officer who led the Swedish cell.



When he was arrested in 1989, among other incriminating material in his flat were a barometer with the barometric device removed and a lot of clothes from Malta, for which he gave differing explanations. The importance of the clothing, of course, was that the device which blew apart Pan Am 103 was said to have been wrapped inside clothes from a shop in Malta, run by one Tony Gauci. And it was Gauci's "identification" of Megrahi, some years later, as the man who resembled the purchaser of the clothes, which led to his conviction.

However, it transpired that the evidently unreliable Gauci had also earlier "identified" Talb as the man who had bought the clothes. The younger, taller Talb was certainly a better match for the description Gauci had initially given to Scottish police about the man who had come into his shop. In the October before the bombing Talb had also made a visit to the Maltese cell via Cyprus, the terrorists' financial headquarters. When he was arrested he was found with a diary and a calendar with 21 December 1988 – the date of the atrocity – marked on both.

Unbelievably Talb was called at the Zeist trial as a *prosecution* witness to deny that he or his networks had had anything to do with the Lockerbie bombing. But in order to persuade him to answer questions in the witness box, he was given immunity from prosecution! Nevertheless Talb did a good job of self-incrimination, admitting terrorist activity and with no good answers for the suspicious clothing, his visits to Malta, his connections and the funds going into his bank accounts. A fellow terrorist who gave evidence against Talb when he was convicted in Sweden for other bombings against Israeli and American targets, said Talb was a changed person when he returned from Malta – depressed and quiet.

The Goben memorandum

THEN there is the curious but unidentified "Abu Elias". According to Khreesat, the bomb-maker, he was a senior PFLP member linked to Jibril in Syria, who was both an explosives and an airport security expert. Khreesat thought "Abu Elias" lived in Sweden, but said he was with the German cell in October and was given one of the improvised explosive devices. But even more damning information about "Elias" came from relatives of a Palestinian called Mobdi Goben, a PFLP-GC member who had run the groups' weapons store in Belgrade, where "Elias" was apparently a frequent visitor.

Goben's relatives said that on his deathbed he had left a detailed memorandum about his activities to bring down an aircraft in revenge for the US shooting down of a civilian Iranian airbus by a gung-ho US naval captain. They claimed Syria still held the memorandum. Its existence became known half way through Megrahi's trial. Despite efforts by the defence to obtain it from Syria, if it did exist, Syria was not playing ball. However some of its apparent contents were revealed.

Goben had made the astonishing claim that "Elias" travelled to Frankfurt via Belgrade with Khaled Jafaar (who died on the flight), and that he had given the unwitting Jafaar the device in luggage to take on to Pan Am 103. That evidence fitted with Khreesat's account of Elias having one of his bombs. Further, another of Goben's family, who was seeking asylum in Norway, had admitted to Norwegian intelligence officials that he had overseen payments on behalf of the PFLP to both "Elias" and to Khaled Jafaar. Goben had identified "Elias" as a named Syrian, resident in the US who was indeed related to Jibril. He was found to have paid travellers cheques into his bank account from none other than Dalkamoni (the German cell leader) yet the American FBI and security services gave him a clean bill of health.

A terrorist network

WHAT is clear is that an experienced terrorist network was at large with the money, equipment and expertise to have carried out the Lockerbie bombing. Further, there is much circumstantial evidence to link the gang to Lockerbie: the discovery of Maltese clothing; Pan Am timetables; and very similar explosive devices – a 30-minute barometric timer which starts when a plane reaches 3,000 feet. Pan Am 103 exploded 38 minutes after take off from Heathrow – exactly the same time as tests on the recovered devices indicated that they would detonate.

Compare that with the evidence against Megrahi, who was named by a Libyan who turned out to be a paid CIA informer, a proven liar and fantasist, and who was totally discredited in court. He was identified as "resembling" the man who had bought the clothing which was found to surround the bomb on Pan Am 103. Megrahi was in Malta and for him to be the guilty party, the prosecution needed to prove that the bomb went into the baggage system in Malta on a flight to Frankfurt, and was then transferred on to the feeder flight to Pan Am 103. But there is no definitive evidence that it did go on at Malta; nor that Megrahi played any part in putting it on the flight.

As his appeal would have made clear, Megrahi travelled and possessed a false passport because, like many Libyan businessmen then, he was sanctions-busting for the then isolated Gaddafi regime. That may have been one of the reasons his defence lawyers told him not to go into the witness box, coupled with the fact that they no doubt believed the evidence against him was so weak he would be acquitted alongside his co-accused, Lamin Fhimah, and that Talb had done a rather good job in self-incrimination.

The Libya 'link'

SO WAS Libya even involved in the Lockerbie bombing? The answer is that nobody knows. Libya certainly had a grim record in state-sponsored terrorism, but there was scant evidence to link it directly to Lockerbie at the Zeist trial. The links to Libya came from the suggestion that a fragment of a timing device which survived the blast was an MST-13 timer produced by a Swiss company, Mebo, which had supplied some to Libya. But it had also supplied them to East Germany; and in any event Libya could have sold them on. Libya could well have had links with the PFLP and PPF cells; but again there was no evidence of such a link.

So why, then, was all this evidence against the Syrian- and Iranian-backed PFLP and PPF ignored? As Paul Foot explained in *Private Eye*'s special report, *Lockerbie: The Flight from Justice*, initially they *were* pursued – for a solid 18 months, right up to the point of announcing that arrests were imminent. Then suddenly the political make-up of he Middle East changed dramatically. Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and the US/UN forces needed Arab support beyond their usual friends in Egypt. The Syrians were themselves worried about Hussein's expansion in the area, and in November 1990 deals were signed to both neutralize Iran and to bring Syrian forces into the combined operation known as Desert Storm to reclaim Kuwait.

As Paul Foot described it, Lockerbie was to be played down and President Bush snr declared: "Syria took a bum rap on this." No wonder no one now wants a public inquiry and the question remains: who was really behind the biggest ever terrorist atrocity on British soil?

PROPERTY NEWS

Can we fix it?

WHEN the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) issued its lenient fines for systematic bid-rigging in the construction industry last week, it cited the recession as the reason it only fined guilty companies around 1 percent of annual turnover when it could have demanded up to 10 percent. It also eschewed heavier criminal penalties available to it, including jail time.

This will have come as a relief to directors of the miscreant firms – not least Lord (Norman) Blackwell, former head of John Major's Downing Street policy unit but now chairman of Interserve, the company hit with the second largest OFT fine of £11.6m. Since 2003, Blackwell also happens to have been a non-executive director of… the Office of Fair Trading!

Blackwell was initially appointed to the OFT board until 2008, but a fortnight before the announcement in April last year that companies including Interserve were being investigated he had his position extended for a further two years.

Newspaper coverage of the scandal honed in on two high profile victims of the builders' corrupt tendering: Bedales School and a posh Mayfair development funded by Sir Alan Sugar. But other less glamorous victims show how callous the builders really are.

Among those ripped-off were: 33 schools (mostly primary), eight colleges, eight universities, a renal dialysis unit, a diabetes centre, a hospital's critical care unit, a miners' welfare centre, two wheelchair bungalows, a rest home, medical centres, a library and a hospice.

Nor is this OFT investigation into a small sample of relatively small contracts likely to have found the largest cost to taxpayers from bid-rigging. Many of the same companies have been involved in scores of bids for much bigger private finance initiative deals, which have far fewer bidders, are eminently more riggable and have turned out to cost the taxpayer well over the odds.

Interserve and Carillion (cited together for a rip-off on a bid for a police station) have been involved in PFI deals worth billions. And very profitably so. In 2006 Carillion sold a portfolio of PFI projects it had on its books at £24m for £46m; and this year Interserve sold its stakes in a batch of PFI projects for 2.4 times their value. Time for another investigation surely?

Berkeley stunts

ELSEWHERE in the property world plunging property prices and rising home repossessions seem to have done little to chasten the behaviour of the developer Berkeley Homes.

A few months back, when Daisy Waugh wrote in the *Sunday Times* about the developer's Gun Wharf apartment block in Portsmouth, the property company was so thrilled by the attention it sent two PR women and a marketing man to give her a tour. When she then published a waspish critique of the waterfront apartments, the developer was livid and threatened to withdraw its advertising from the paper.

Fast forward to a recent spread in the London *Evening Standard* about the nightmare for buyers who have bought off-plan. This report revealed that Berkeley Homes is threatening to sue more than 80 homeowners for up to £100,000 each for failing to honour sales contracts on apartments now worth far less than the original off-plan prices.

When the company was given the right to reply on the article and realised its content, it immediately contacted the advertising department to say it would withhold its adverts if the article went ahead. A tough threat indeed, considering the battle faced by daily newspapers to fill their advertising space these days. Fortunately the paper stuck to its guns and the article was published as planned.

Will this lack of success stop Berkeley's aggressive tactics? Watch this space.

SCHOOL BUILDING

Open and shut case

ANOTHER piece of smart school planning emerges from Salford, where the last *Eye* reported plans for a state-of-the-art high school on a site next to a heavily polluted A-road.

Now Charlestown Primary School and North Grecian Street School are to be closed in 2011 and their pupils sent to a newly built school called Wheatersfield Primary. Parents are concerned that the new school will be overcrowded because it is being built next to a massive new housing development for hundreds of people (and their children).

Flooding is their second concern since the school site is on the River Irwell's flood plain. When this was pointed out to planners, they came up with an "escape route" – a 100 yard route of ramps and steps to take the children to safe, higher ground.

The flood risk also means that changing rooms cannot be built on the school's playing fields. It's unclear where the children will change although the planning document mentions the facilities of a local leisure centre just over half a mile away.

Overcrowding, flood risks, escape routes and disrupted PE lessons? Locals want to know why the council doesn't just keep the two existing schools open.

HEATHROW EXPANSION

Collusion course

A SHEAF of documents released to *Private Eye* under freedom of information law suggests the government actively collaborated with the British Airports Authority (BAA) to force through airport expansion – up to and including handing over secret information from MI5 to help BAA deal with protesters.

The agenda of a bilateral meeting on 19 June 2007 between the then transport minister Douglas Alexander and BAA starts with an angry denial of any collaboration. Agenda Point 4, on "Heathrow Consultation", reads: "Recent media reports alleging 'collusion' between government and BAA have been robustly denied."

But a fistful of other papers undermine this. In March 2007, for example, briefing papers prior to Alexander's bilateral with Stephen Nelson, BAA chief executive, and the firm's spin doctor, Joe Irvin, advised the then transport secretary: "Common Voice campaign – BAA to give Secretary of State an update on industry campaign to champion the benefits of airport expansion."

The papers suggest the government's public "consultation" over Heathrow not only relied on figures drawn up by BAA, which decided how environmental damage should be assessed, but that civil servants worked "closely with BAA to assess the scale of reductions and mitigation needed".

Most striking of all, however, the papers strongly suggest that Alexander was passing sensitive information from the spooks at MI5 to BAA to help it deal with protestors. One 25 June minute of a meeting between Alexander and BAA says: "Stephen Nelson raised the prospect of a Climate Camp near the airport between 14-21 August and said they were preparing for this." This was then followed by a redacted paragraph labelled "XXX Information exempted under Section 23 XXX".

Section 23 of the freedom of information act says information is exempt if it is "supplied by or relating to the following bodies: The Security Service (MI5) and the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6)", as well as GCHQ and the SAS.

LIBEL TOURISM

Cardiac unrest

AT THE beginning of September, *Circulation*, journal of the American Heart Association, published a correction to its findings of a trial of a metal shunt being offered by the American company NMT Medical to close congenital holes in the heart.

It was a remarkably long correction – covering one-and-a-half pages with four pages of supplementary data – but there was once nothing unusual in researchers admitting errors. Science proceeds by the rigorous examination of ideas without fear or favour. When a scientist's colleagues find fault, he admits it and moves on. But maybe not in Britain any more.

The correction notwithstanding, NMT is still suing Dr Peter Wilmshurst (pictured, above) in a libel action scientists regard as dangerous as the British Chiropractor Association's attempt to punish science writer Simon Singh (see *Eyes passim*).

As we reported in May (*Eye* 1235), the NMT study failed to find that closing holes in the heart lessened the risk of patients suffering migraine. Wilmshurst, who helped with the trials, told an American online medical journal that the failure may have been the result of faults with the device. He went on to allege that NMT had withheld trial data because it feared that it might undercut sales of the device for other uses, such as stroke treatment.

"I'm not as concerned about the companies as I am about the fact that the patients who are in the studies will suffer," Dr Wilmshurst told the American website theheart.org, which covers research in cardiology.

NMT Medical executives claimed Wilmshurst had turned on them and the other doctors involved in the trial because its results undermined his theory of a link between holes in the heart and migraines. "Everything was being completely torn to shreds by his attacks," said John E Ahern, the company chief executive. Unfortunately for the company, the correction undermines NMT's picture of Wilmshurst as a disappointed man who was hurling abuse because the trial subverted his pet theory.

Mark Lewis, Wilmshurst's lawyer, told the *Eye* the case was yet another example of libel tourism, one of the few booming industries left in Britain. The website theheart.org carried news of his refusal to endorse the trial because, as he told the site, "I could not in conscience sign the declaration, [which reads,] 'The authors had full access to the data and take responsibility for its integrity.' To sign a declaration knowing it to be false would make me guilty of a criminal offence in the United Kingdom."

The original report of the NMT results appeared in *Circulation* – an American medical journal – yet the case is being brought before the claimant-friendly judges in the London high court. As with the chiropractors and Simon Singh, NMT is suing Wilmshurst personally. If he loses, he faces bankruptcy. Even if he wins, he'll still be tens of thousands of pounds out of pocket.

The silencing of British science is starting to attract international attention. As a science writer for the *New York Times* noted recently: "The problem the [English] libel laws create is not so much that critical stories can't be written, but that they won't be. The potential for a libel case is a powerful deterrent to criticism: the pieces aren't worth the hassle."

Eventually there is going to be a major medical scandal. The public will turn on scientists and ask why they didn't blow the whistle, and the scientists will reply: "Because the politicians and the judges wouldn't let us."

'Ratbiter'

In the City

A DIRECT test for Gordon Brown's much trumpeted financial sanctions on Zimbabwe and Robert Mugabe's cronies has arrived with the takeover bid for Central African Mining & Exploration (CAMEC), headed by former England spin bowler Phil Edmonds, a man many in the City love to hate.

The bid promises a potential £61m golden goodbye to CAMEC for two offshore companies that have been linked to Conrad "Billy" Rautenbach, the controversial Zimbabwean businessman who for more than three years has been the power behind CAMEC. However, Rautenbach is on the European Union/British and US list of those whose assets are supposedly frozen. Rautenbach earned this distinction because of his "strong ties" to the Mugabe regime – which presents something of a problem to the bidder, Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation, and its advisers, not to mention CAMEC.

A Treasury notice last January stated that "all funds or economic resources" of those named on the sanctions list were to be frozen. "No funds or economic resources are to be made available, directly or indirectly, to or for the benefit" of those on the list unless authorised by the Treasury. "Financial institutions and other bodies or persons" must notify the Treasury of any accounts, funds or economic resources held by those named which they were required to freeze.

Two weeks after that notice was issued, CAMEC reportedly notified the Treasury that Rautenbach had an interest in 306m shares, a near 11 percent stake, held by two British Virgin Islands companies – Harvest View and Meryweather Investments. These companies are in line to receive 20p a share in cash from ENRC. Harvest View has been identified by CAMEC as a company "controlled by" Rautenbach. The ownership of Meryweather is unclear but has suspected links to Rautenbach and/or his high-powered friends around Mugabe. A Rautenbach spokeswoman denied he had any connection to Meryweather.

So the bid presents headaches for ENRC, which needs the Rautenbach stake, and any bank making a payment for the shares. And it is a headache for CAMEC, which has to register any transfer of the shares held by the BVI companies to ENRC.

There is no mention of Rautenbach, Harvest View or Meryweather in the offer announcement. But then there have been few mentions of "Billy" in any CAMEC document, despite his key role in managing the group's all-important Mukondo cobalt mine in the Democratic Republic of Congo – he is supposedly banned from the DRC for profiteering – or its valuable platinum deposits in Zimbabwe, or its vital trucking fleet.

However, buried away in the announcement was an unusual statement: "Various issues have arisen under English and US law in relation to the possible application of international sanctions legislation. As at the date of this announcement, these issues are being discussed with HM Treasury and Office of Foreign Asset Control of the US Department of the Treasury… there are a few senior managers of the company… who are US citizens and who may not participate in or support transactions involving sanctioned countries or individuals. These US sanction requirements are in addition to UK rules, which clearly apply to ENRC as well. Accordingly, ENRC will be taking steps to ensure that no US persons… are involved in a transaction that would further the interest of a US sanctioned person or entity, and ENRC is taking steps to make sure US managers are not involved in or support in any way any CAMEC operations that involve a US sanctioned person or entity, until such time as ENRC obtains approval by the relevant government… The Board of ENRC has appointed a special Oversight Committee to negotiate this transaction and work on post-share acquisition issues… who will set up a separate UK company to acquire and hold the shares assuming ENRC is successful."

ENRC advisers insist the company will not do anything illegal and is intent on obtaining the necessary legal clearances regarding the Rautenbach stake. Neither Harvest View nor Meryweather is shown to be the among the 55 percent who have accepted the bid. The interim answer may be to pay any money due to the BVI shareholders into a special escrow account – but that is hardly likely to make "Billy" a happy man. And as he supported the bid, the assumption must be that he sees a way of collecting sooner rather than later.

Especially as, no doubt entirely by coincidence, the very day – September 18 – that the agreed ENRC bid for CAMEC was announced, Rautenbach stepped into a courtroom in Pretoria to end his ten years as a fugitive from justice in South Africa; a little local problem that had never bothered CAMEC.

Rautenbach fled South Africa in 1999 and was charged with bribery, fraud and tax evasion relating to his Wheels of Africa trucking business and a Hyundai car dealership. Wheels of Africa collapsed but the business, renamed SABOT, ended up in CAMEC in 2006, bought from Rautenbach for almost £2m.

Rautenbach has been seeking to cut a deal to make the South African charges go away. One of his messengers reportedly was organised crime boss Glenn Agliotti, currently charged with the 2005 murder of mining company promoter Brett Kebble. Agliotti alleged that Rautenbach's lawyer paid the former South African police commissioner Jackie Selebi to have the arrest warrant lifted. Selebi denied any such payment.

The sticking point in negotiations was that Rautenbach insisted on no jail time. And so it came to pass. The done deal before he stepped off the plane was that he pleaded guilty only to a mere 326 tax charges relating to his company SA Botswana Hauliers (SABOT anybody?), all criminal charges were dropped and he pays R40m (£3.4m), of which only R10m was payable immediately.

That deal frees Rautenbach's frozen assets in South Africa and enables him once again to operate from there. It also indicates that "Billy" has powerful friends in South Africa who could now be useful in lobbying for his removal from that sanctions list or the dropping of sanctions. It has long been rumoured that Rautenbach was an "asset" of South African intelligence providing information on the DRC, Zimbabwe and other countries in the region of interest to Pretoria. That might help explain – along with his influence with the Mugabe regime – why he was never extradited.

Zimbabwean black farmers whose land had been seized by a Rautenbach company told a Channel 4 *Dispatches* documentary earlier this year how he warned them: "What part of fuck off do you not understand… You cannot do anything to me. I am a powerful man."

Rautenbach is said to be close to the influential Emmerson Mnangagwa, also on the US sanctions list and head of the Joint Operations Command which controls Zimbabwe's army and police. Rautenbach worked with him and Zimbabwe army officers in the DRC when Mugabe was backing then president Laurent Kabila. Rautenbach ended up running the DRC mining para-statal firm Gecamines and transferring assets to companies he and Zimbabwe controlled before he was removed. Those assets included cobalt and copper mines later bought by CAMEC.

Because of his political connections and control of the Mukondo cobalt mine and the 400-plus trucking fleet, ENRC would seem to need Rautenbach – at least for now. So it can be assumed that it will be doing everything it can, within the sanctions limitations, to make him a happy camper.

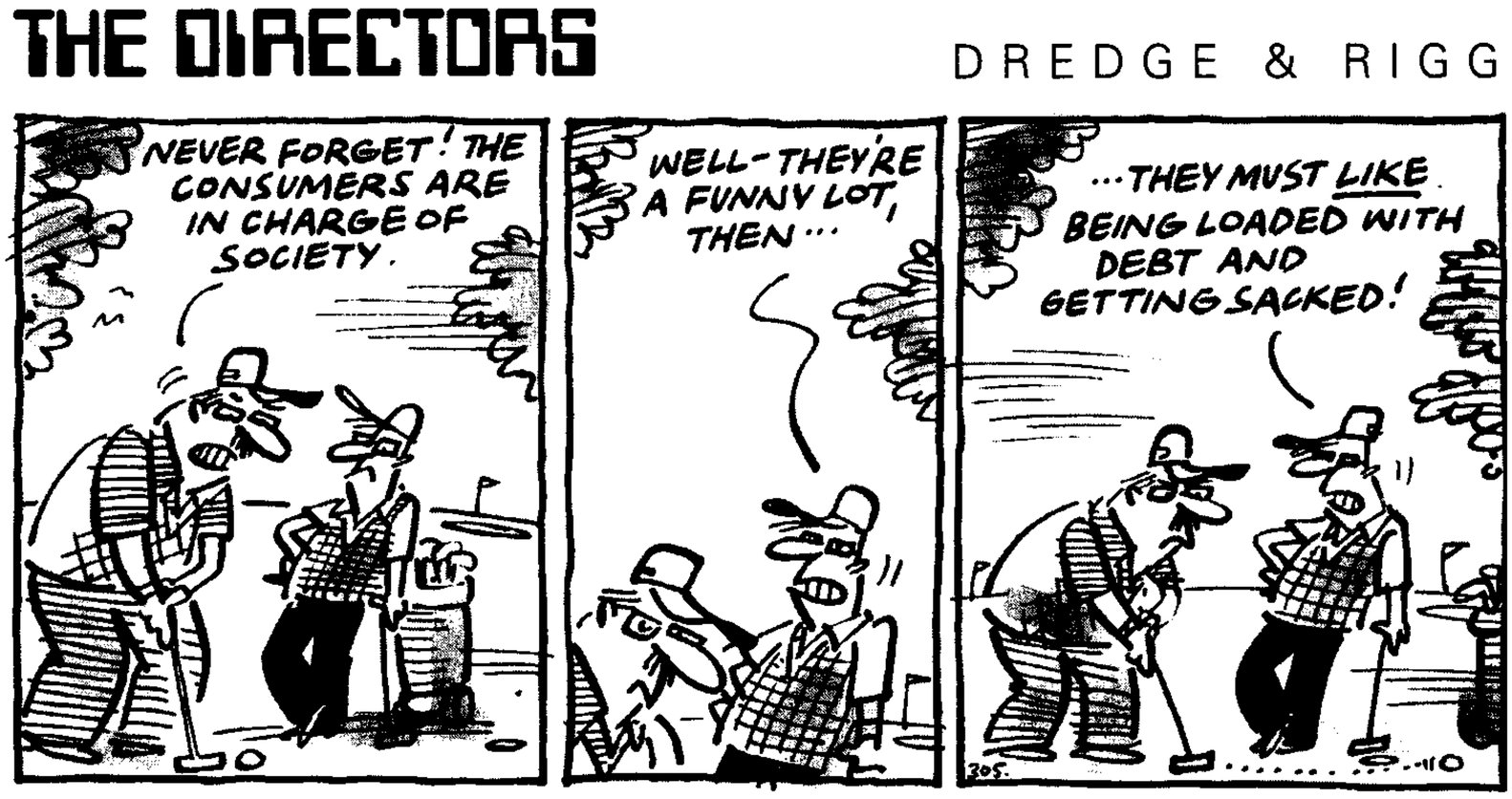
The takeover bid was generated by major CAMEC Israeli shareholder Dan Gertler and the Gertner family, backed by several major institutional shareholders as an alternative to a boardroom coup to oust Edmonds and his Zimbabwean partner, Andrew Groves. All were unhappy with the performance of CAMEC, whose shares had collapsed from 100p in 2006 to 10p ahead of the bid negotiations.

Gertler and friends made the fatal mistake of selling assets – including the other half of the Mukondo mine – to CAMEC without taking up the proposed four seats on the board. So he ended up the biggest shareholder but with no boardroom voice.

The Gertler camp also found itself unable to influence Rautenbach's stranglehold on the company's revenues from the DRC and Zimbabwe. CAMEC is said to have been starved of cash in London. The latest accounts, published last week after the bid, revealed that the company generated negative cash flow from its operations during the two years to March 2009 and has had to negotiate a deal with HMRC to pay overdue tax liabilities by instalments.

Rautenbach is understood to have backed the plan to remove Edmonds and Groves. Edmonds, who is rumoured to have health problems, was not unhappy to go.

The ENRC bid pre-empted the boardroom coup. But so keen were Gertler and the institutions to get out that they were prepared to sell at a big loss and accept less than the 30p-plus they wanted. The Gertler camp acquired most of their shares at 40p. A possible higher bid from the Brazilian mining group Vale


THE DIRECTORS
DREDGE & RIGG
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WELL-THEY'RE A FUNNY LOT, THEN…
…THEY MUST LIKE BEING LOADED WITH DEBT AND GETTING SACKED!

was stalled by due diligence problems.

CAMEC has been very good to Rautenbach and the Mugabe regime, even if it has done little for shareholders. It paid £30m in cash to companies linked to Rautenbach or his family interests in 2006 and 2007 for assets in the DRC and Zimbabwe. And it facilitated a $100m "soft" loan, seemingly without interest, security or repayment date to the bankrupt Mugabe regime ahead of last year's disputed election.

This loan, to be repaid from platinum mine earnings, was largely unwittingly funded by American hedge fund group Och-Ziff, which took 150m CAMEC shares at 50p each. Not surprisingly it backed the bid and any boardroom coup.

CAMEC issued the Rautenbach company Harvest View with 172m shares at 18p each as part of the 2006 deal, which gave it half the Mukondo mine. The Harvest View shares were supposedly subject to a "lock-in" for 12 months. But within seven months its stake was down to 91m shares. What happened to the missing 80m shares? No sale by Harvest View was notified to the stock market. CAMEC has refused access to the register of notifiable interests which might explain. But if, as seems likely, Harvest View sold the shares as the CAMEC price went to 100p, then Rautenbach could have realised at least £30-£40m tax-free. Any sale required CAMEC's consent. Harvest View still holds the 91m shares, worth £18m on the bid.

In April 2008, Rautenbach orchestrated the purchase of platinum assets in Zimbabwe prized away from Anglo Platinum by the Mugabe regime. These assets quickly found their way to a Zimbabwe company, Todal Mining, of which "Billy" was a director and which was 60 percent owned by a BVI company, Lefever Finance, registered at the same address as Harvest View. The minority shareholder was the Mugabe government. Also registered at that BVI address was Meryweather Investments, which received 215m CAMEC shares plus $5m in cash for its Lefever shares. Meryweather still holds those shares – worth £43m on the bid.

Will "Billy" Rautenbach be able to make one last big CAMEC score, and how will ENRC deal with a man who has so much baggage but holds the key to the assets they want?

PLANET FOOTBALL

Hull City

WHAT is going on behind the scenes as the Premier League club's disastrous season continues?

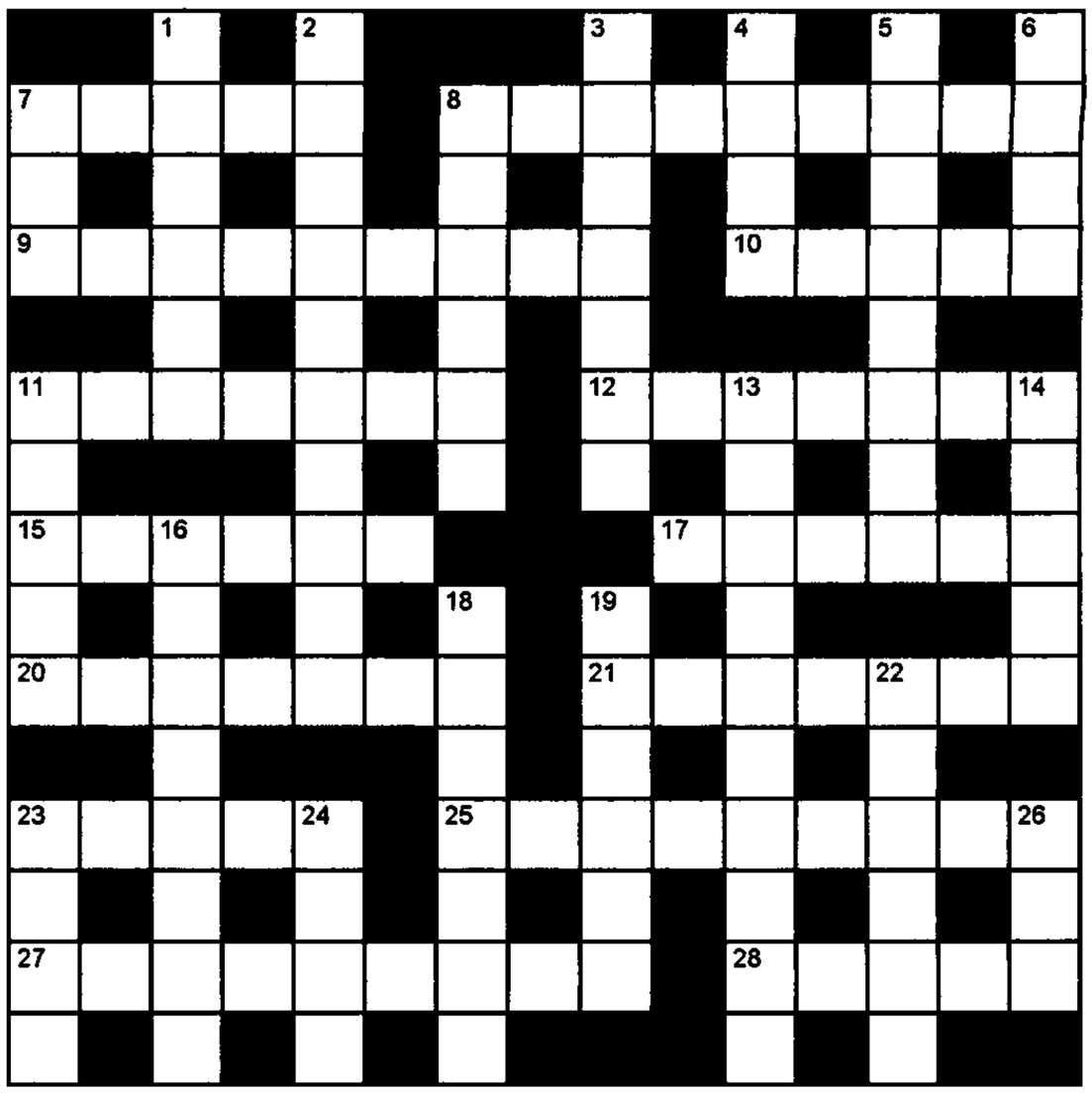
Last year's accounts for both the club and its parent company Tiger Holdings, due in May and February respectively, have still not been filed – an offence for which directors can and are prosecuted, despite club chairman Paul Duffen maintaining it is no crime. Meanwhile, the club's newly disclosed major shareholder, property man Russell Bartlett, resigned last month as a Tiger Holdings director having only been appointed in July. The directors are now two presumed nominees in Jersey. And last week the registered office was changed from Bartlett's company in Essex to that of accountants Grant Thornton. This may not be good news.

The delay in the Hull City and Tiger accounts suggests problems with the probably different auditors who must sign off the now highly historic accounts, be satisfied that the information contained is correct and that both companies will be "going concerns" for the next 12 months. Since last month Bartlett has finally managed to produce the overdue 2007 plus the 2008 accounts for his R3 Investment Group, which invested £4m in Tiger. The 2008 accounts show a more than doubled loss for R3 of £628,000 and a £1.2m dispute with the taxman. They also show £1.7m owed by the companies that run Hull's home ground, the KC Stadium – both have also yet to file their accounts due in January and May and one is threatened with being struck off. More bad news seems likely.

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 401

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 9 October 2009

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

7 Morbid type rejected hump around house (5)
8 Ground testicle: bathing belle's accessory? (5,4)
9 Unlike a credit crunch victim, piss around, not drinking with Dicky (6,3)
10 A way to oust Tory centre, going down very well (5)
11 Rails against "shit" clue in cryptic crossword? (4,3)
12 Orifice distorted, snort one "large" (7)
15 See 23ac.
17 See 23dn.
20 Heard rope without ends is something to put in your organ (7)
21 Celebs, etc. appear in this show – how crappy! (4,3)
23/15 Wee Scots form of address: "Poser!" (5,6)
25 Anticipate sex, as the drill sergeant says to over-eager squaddies? (4,3,2)
27 Crook flashes for cons (9)
28 Up before court briefly (5)

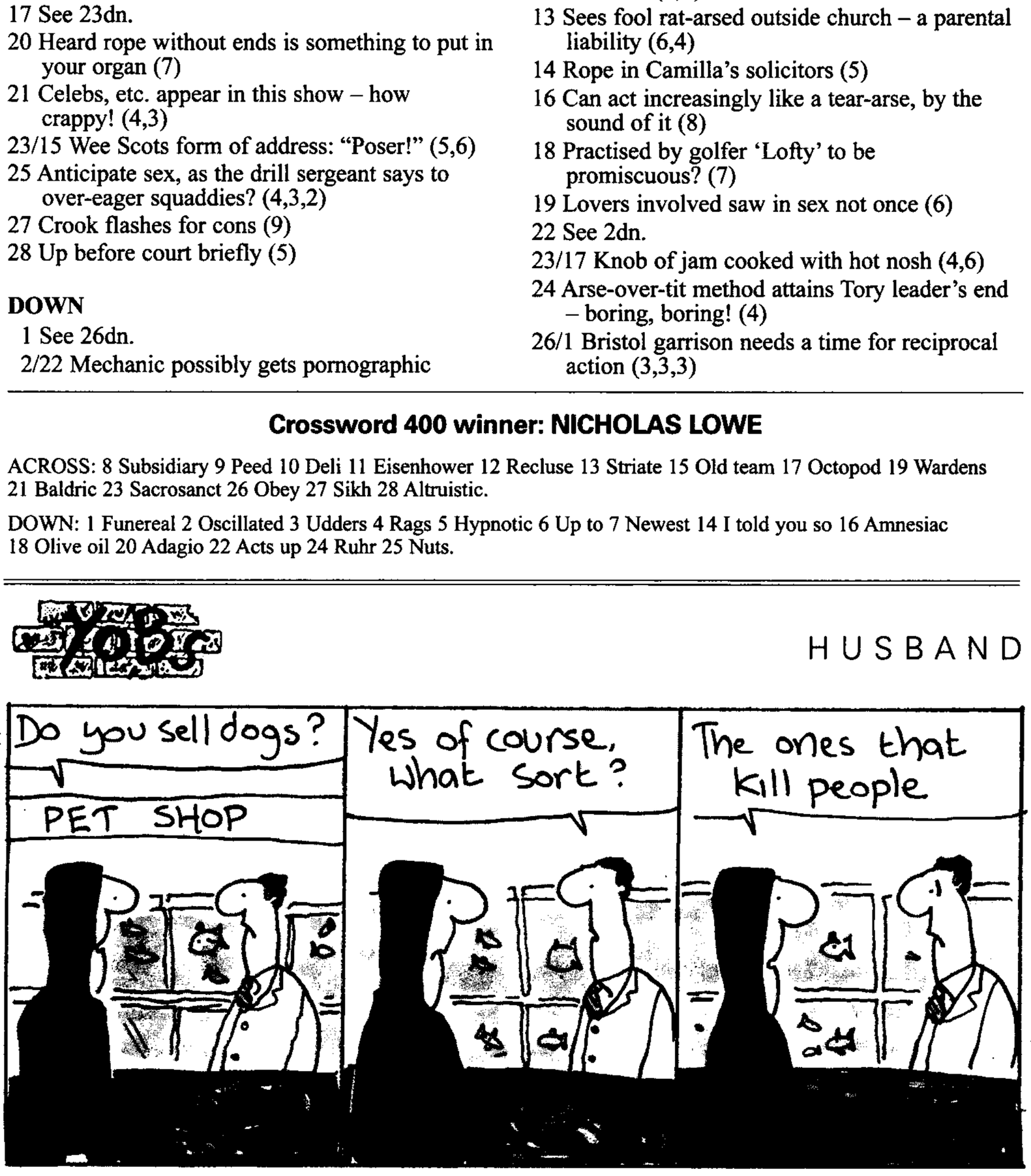
DOWN

1 See 26dn.
2/22 Mechanic possibly gets pornographic 'choker' operative (4-6,6)
3 A time when hole is vibrated with fan (4-3)
4 See 11ac.
5 Arse penetrated by idiot doctor – it takes a beating (4,4)
6 Take part in game shag under piano (4)
7 Gordon Brown, leader-wise: on the inside a rabbit! (3)
8 Pissed Mark Thatcher's first ball (6)
11/4 Mounts Pat with force, displaying bollocks (5,4)
13 Sees fool rat-arsed outside church – a parental liability (6,4)
14 Rope in Camilla's solicitors (5)
16 Can act increasingly like a tear-arse, by the sound of it (8)
18 Practised by golfer 'Lofty' to be promiscuous? (7)
19 Lovers involved saw in sex not once (6)
22 See 2dn.
23/17 Knob of jam cooked with hot nosh (4,6)
24 Arse-over-tit method attains Tory leader's end – boring, boring! (4)
26/1 Bristol garrison needs a time for reciprocal action (3,3,3)

Crossword 400 winner: NICHOLAS LOWE

ACROSS: 8 Subsidiary 9 Peed 10 Deli 11 Eisenhower 12 Recluse 13 Striate 15 Old team 17 Octopod 19 Wardens 21 Baldric 23 Sacrosanct 26 Obey 27 Sikh 28 Altruistic.

DOWN: 1 Funereal 2 Oscillated 3 Udders 4 Rags 5 Hypnotic 6 Up to 7 Newest 14 I told you so 16 Amnesiac 18 Olive oil 20 Adagio 22 Acts up 24 Ruhr 25 Nuts.



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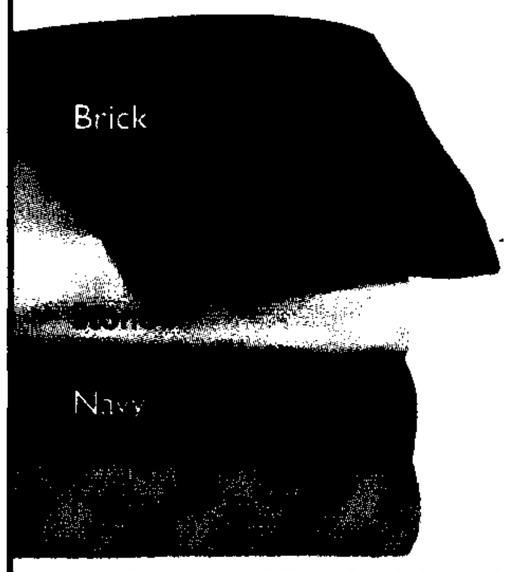

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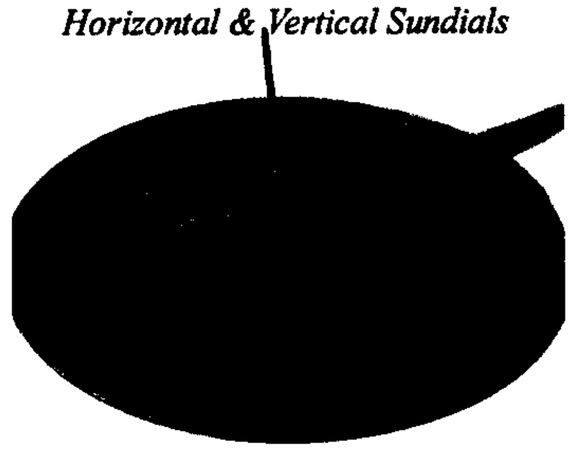

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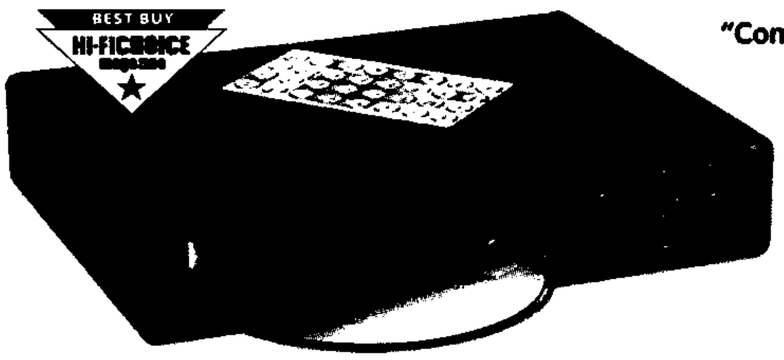

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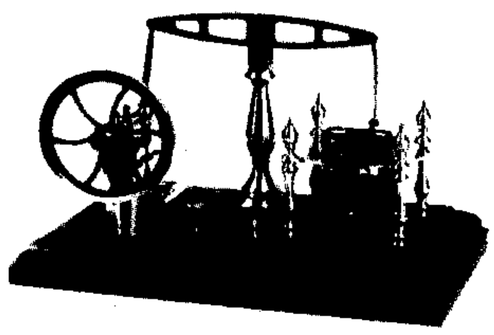

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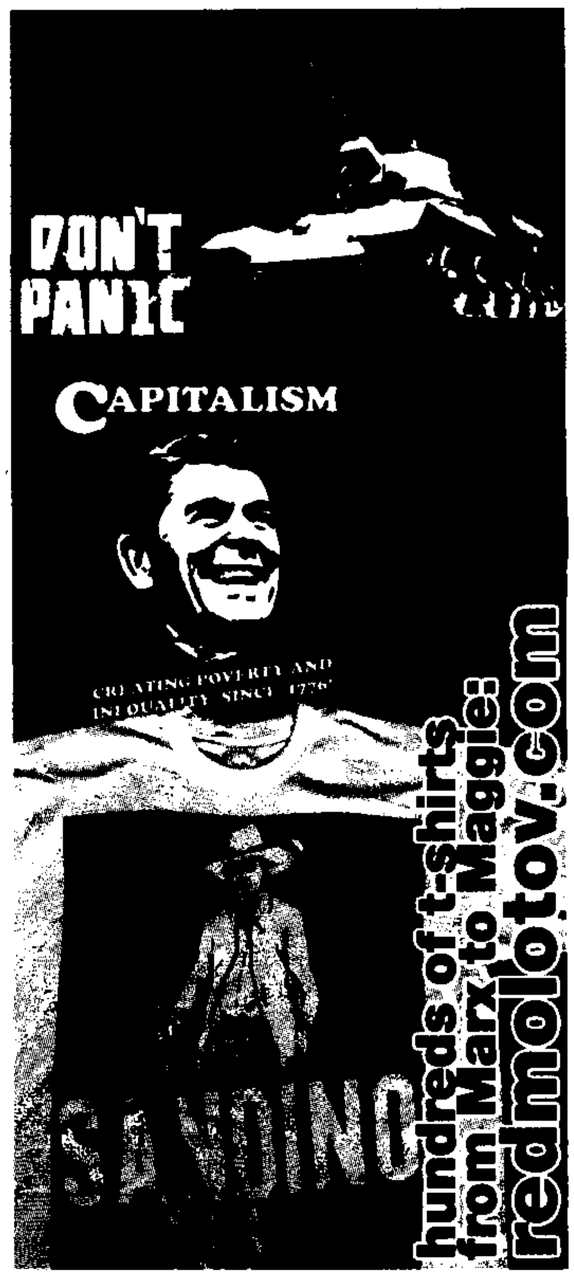

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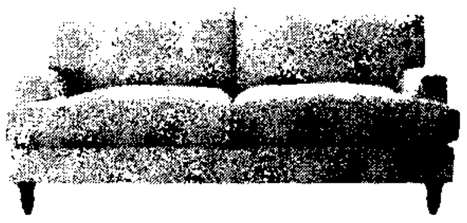

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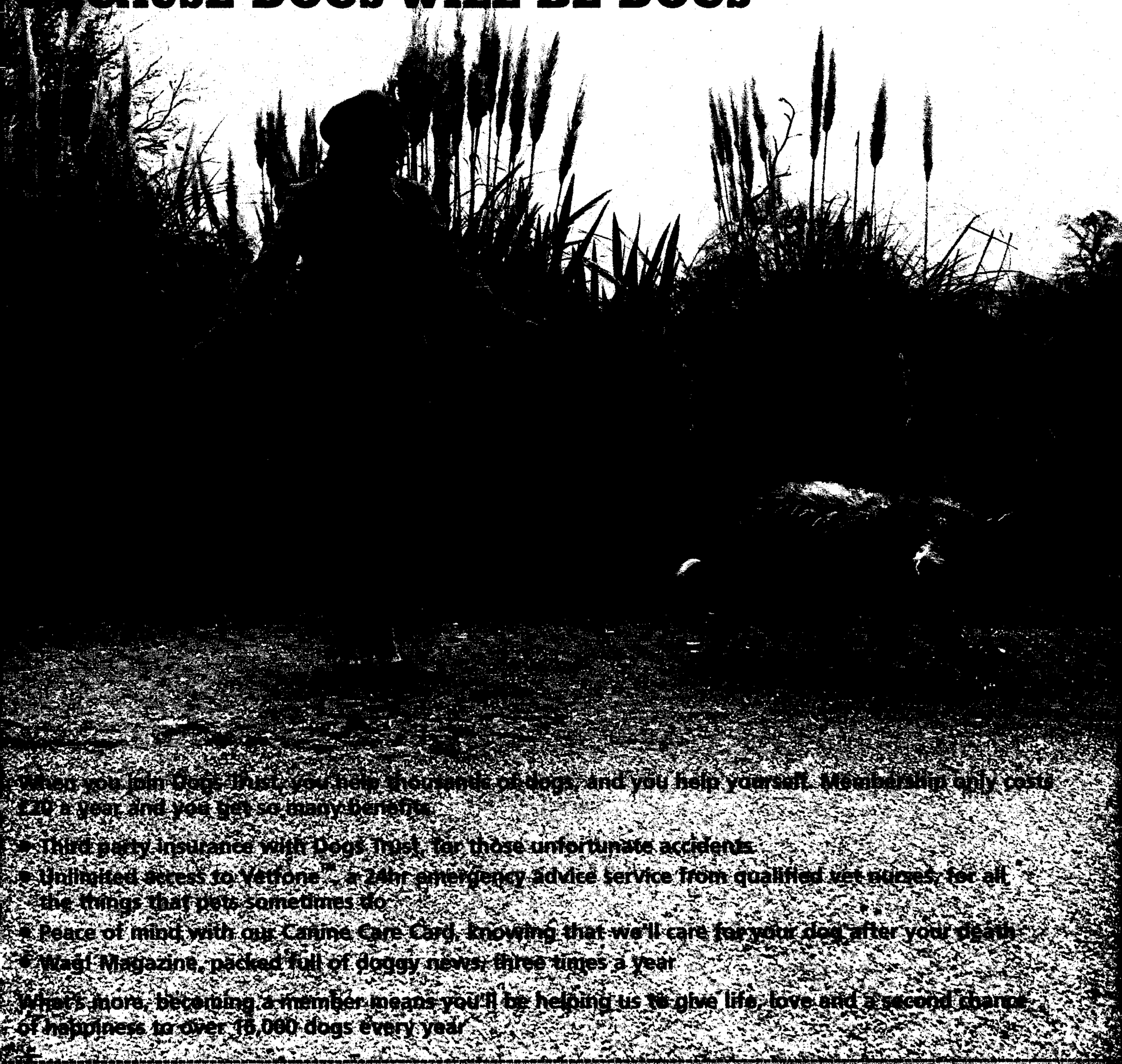

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